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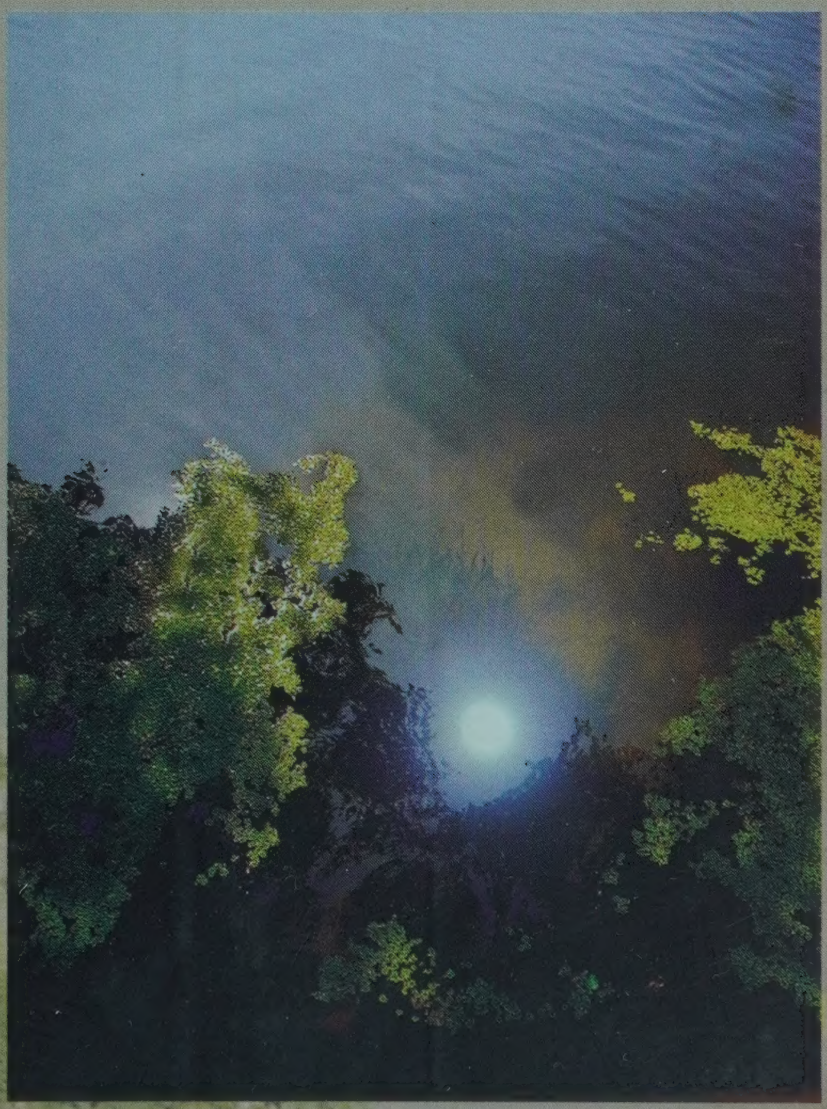
Logical and Ethical Issues

An Essay on Indian Philosophy of Religion



Bimal Krishna Matilal

Bimal Krishna Matilal (1935–91) was Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford University from 1977 to 1991. Matilal was an academic of exceptional scholarship and originality and in his untimely death the world lost an outstanding thinker and philosopher.

The distinctive feature of this work is that the author was consciously motivated by contemporary historical experience: the frequent conflict between communities which have coalesced around different religious beliefs. 'If we can discover,' he wrote in the Introduction to this book, 'the *deep structure*, so to say, of each great religious tradition, an awareness of the fundamental unity of man may emerge out of this discovery, which would be extremely valuable today, in fact, priceless in a world where we have frequent cases of Moradabad, Middle-East, and Northern Ireland.' Needless to say, in our world today the agenda so clearly articulated by Matilal remains relevant.

Matilal took great care to avoid using technical language as the readers he wished to address are not limited to the circle of professional philosophers. To read this work by one of the finest Indian minds of our times is a rewarding experience.

His major publications include the *Navya Nyaya Doctrine of Negation*; *Epistemology, Logic and Grammar in Indian Philosophical Analysis*; *Logic, Language and Reality* and *Perception: An Essay on the Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge*.

Heeraman Tiwari teaches history of ancient Indian ideas and Sanskrit at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. He has a Ph.D. in Sanskrit from Delhi University and D. Phil in Indian Philosophy from Balliol College, Oxford. He has edited (with Jonardan Ganeri) Bimal Krishna Matilal's *The Character of Logic in India* and is currently working on two new books, *From the Word to the World* and *What is Hinduism?*.

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An Essay on Indian Philosophy of Religion

BIMAL KRISHNA MATILAL

Edited and with Introduction by
Heeraman Tiwari

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गहनतिमिरकल्पा मामिका चित्तवृत्ति-
र्धवलकिरणपातैर्भामती प्रापिता यैः।
अयमतिशयदीनां ग्रन्थकल्पो हि तेषां
भवतु विरलभक्तिर्म्लानपुष्पोपहारः।।१ ॥
न्यायाचार्याय चार्याय मधुसूदनशर्मणे।
तर्कतीर्थपदाह्वाय श्रीमते विश्वबन्धवे ॥२।।
स्वर्गताय च पूज्याय गुरवेऽनन्तशर्मणे।
विद्वज्जनप्रमोदाय कृतिरेषा समर्प्यते ॥३ ॥

This Book is Respectfully
Dedicated
to
Pandit Madhusudan Nyayacharya
and
Pandit Bisvabandhu Tarkatirtha
and
In Memory of
Pandit Anantakumar Nyaya-Tarkatirtha

Preface

We are happy to be able to include in the Chronicle Classics Series this work by Bimal Krishna Matilal, the Spalding Professor of Indian Religions and Ethics at Oxford from 1977 to 1991. The distinctive feature of this work is that, unlike many other professional philosophers, the author in this instance was consciously motivated by contemporary historical experience: the frequent conflict between communities which have coalesced around different religious beliefs. 'If we can discover,' he wrote in his Introduction to this book, 'the *deep structure*, so to say, of each great religious tradition, an awareness of the fundamental unity of man may emerge out of this discovery, which would be extremely valuable today, in fact, priceless in a world where we have frequent cases of Moradabad, Middle-East, and Northern Ireland.' Matilal wrote thus in 1981 and he had in mind the recent Hindu-Muslim riots in India as much as the Palestinian-Israeli or Protestant-Catholic conflicts. He also cited with evident approval the words of the founder of the Spalding Chair defining 'the aim of bringing together the world's great religions in closer understanding, harmony and friendship.'

Needless to say, in our world today the agenda so clearly articulated by Matilal remains relevant. Equally relevant is Matilal's approach to the problem as a philosopher. While recognizing that the 'goal of unity of mankind' is a distant one, he has 'taken an intellectual approach to the study of religion', exploring the logical and ethical issues in religious belief systems in India. His academic objective in this enterprise is to develop a well-defined discipline of comparative religious studies. In the concluding pages of this book he states that such studies 'can be done objectively and developed into inter-cultural understanding.'

Originally published by the University of Calcutta as the text of a series of lectures by Professor Matilal, this book has been unavailable for a number of years. My friend Dr Heeraman Tiwari of Jawaharlal Nehru University has been kind enough to accept the task of editing this volume, a fitting tribute to his former teacher and research supervisor at Oxford.

Those who have read Matilal's other writings will see that in this book he takes great care to avoid using technical language not accessible to non-specialists. It is evident that the readers he wishes to address are not limited to the circle of professional philosophers. To read this work by one of the finest Indian minds of our times is a rewarding experience.

Sabyasachi Bhattacharya

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Editor's Introduction

'Matilal differed radically from the tradition of studying Classical Indian philosophy as a subject on its own, insulated from the concerns of modern philosophy. He saw this tradition as the intellectual wing of the popular stereotyping that had become very common in characterizing "Eastern" civilizations, especially the nature of Indian culture.'

Amartya Sen[1]

Professor Bimal Krishna Matilal (1935–91) was born in a small town of the 24-Pargana District of what is now West Bengal. Matilal was a student of Sanskrit College, Calcutta University where he studied for the undergraduate and masters degrees in Sanskrit and Indian philosophy. From the beginning Matilal was drawn towards both Mathematics and Philosophy which inspired him to pursue a specialized and comprehensive course in Indian Logic called *Tarkatirtha* (*lit.* the 'Master of Logic'). After completing his masters, Matilal began to teach at the Sanskrit College where he attracted considerable attention among his fellow teachers and students alike for his skills in Indian logic and debate. In 1962 he received a Fulbright Fellowship for further studies at Harvard University, where he studied not only with the famous American Indologist Daniel H.H. Ingalls but also became one of the favourite students of the great logician W.V.O. Quine. While working for his doctorate at Harvard Matilal wrote, under the supervision of Professor D.H.H. Ingalls, a brilliant

[1]From the Address delivered on 6 June 1992, at the Commemoration held on the occasion of the first death anniversary of Professor Bimal Krishna Matilal, in All Souls College, Oxford.

thesis on the Indian theory of *negation*. This was published in 1968 as *Navya Nyāya Doctrine of Negation* under the *Harvard Oriental Series*.

After completing his degree at Harvard, Matilal returned to his job in Sanskrit College. Within a year he was invited to join the Department of South Asian Studies at Toronto University, Canada, where he became Professor of Sanskrit in 1971. When, in 1976, the chair of the 'Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics' at Oxford University fell vacant, Matilal was the obvious choice of the Fellows of All Souls College. In 1977 he moved to Oxford and began with great earnest to interpret, lecture and write on classical Indian philosophy and religion.

At Oxford, Matilal's work earned the admiration and respect of not only those who were working or interested in the field of Indian studies, but also from such well-known Western philosophers as A.J. Ayer, Peter Strawson and Michael Dummett. Before he was struck down by cancer in 1991, B. K. Matilal had published six volumes and left behind the manuscripts of three more books, which were published posthumously. His contribution to the study of India's past also includes the *Journal of Indian Philosophy* which he started publishing in 1971, and continued as its editor until his death. This has long been a reputed forum for highly sophisticated debates on the theories of Indian philosophy, religion, culture and literature.

One of Matilal's main concerns was to remove the misconception about Indian philosophy that the ancient Indians had an isolated view of the world. He tried to dispel certain stereotypical images from the minds of many Western philosophers, 'for whom Indian Philosophy still remains an enigma,'[2] and claimed: 'For while basic philosophical motivation of the ancients might have been very different from those of present-day philosophers, several important questions and puzzles discussed in the classical Indian tradition do seem to coincide to a considerable extent with those discussed today.'[3]

This was clearly his academic mission, which Amartya Sen, Nobel Laureate and a close friend of Professor Matilal, highlighted in his Commemorative Address at All Souls College, Oxford:

Bimal Matilal's dissatisfaction with the traditional interpretation of Indian thought and philosophy, of which Radhakrishnan was a great exponent, can

[2]*Perception: An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, p. 3.

[3]Ibid., pp. 2–3.

be more fully understood only by seeing it in the general context of this deeply misleading interpretation of India in popular imagination and understanding. Bimal and I had talked about this several times in the middle and late 1980s. While Bimal was not a frequent writer of popular articles, I did find something of a public educator in the way he saw the relevance of his own writings. As it happens, that educational role fitted in well with Bimal's programme of uncompromisingly serious scholarly work on Indian epistemology, ethics and logic.[4]

Although Matilal admired the German approach to Indian studies, or Indology as it is known, which is a rigorous philological and historical research into the Sanskrit texts combined with their minute grammatical study, he found in this approach 'a lack of concern for ideas as such, for the philosophical content of the texts.'[5] European Indologists, like Hegel, looked upon Indian culture as mystical while they considered the West and its philosophy, as invented by the Greeks, as mature and pragmatic. Only the Vedanta of Śaṃkara met the requirements of European Indologists for studying Indian culture and religious history. Matilal moved away from such an interpretation of India and 'spent his life pressing the point and demonstrating that Indian thought, even in its most metaphysical and soteriological concerns, was rigorously analytical, logical and discursive.'[6] He advocated the idea of comparative philosophy, for, he says,

> anyone who wants to explain and translate systematically from Indian philosophical writings into a European language will knowingly or unknowingly, be using the method of 'comparative philosophy'. In other words, he cannot help but compare and contrast Indian philosophical concepts with those of Western philosophy, whether or not he is conscious of so doing. Otherwise, any discourse on Indian philosophy in a Western language would, in my opinion, be impossible. Thus, 'comparative philosophy' in this minimal sense, should no longer be treated as a derogatory phrase.[7]

In the present essay Matilal proposes an alternative way of looking at the concept of religion. His predecessors at Oxford, Professors

[4]Amartya Sen: Address delivered on 6 June 1992, at the Commemoration held on the occasion of the first death anniversary of Professor Bimal Krishna Matilal, in All Souls College, Oxford.

[5]J.N. Mohanty, *Relativism, Suffering and Beyond: Essays in Memory of Bimal K. Matilal*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 4.

[6]Ibid., p. 6.

[7]B.K. Matilal, *Epistemology, Logic and Grammar in Indian Philosophical Analysis*, The Hague: Mouton, 1971, p. 13.

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and R.C. Zaehner, had proposed two different ways of bringing about harmony among various religions; while Zaehner believed that a comparative study of world religions will generate a *symphony* among various faiths, Radhakrishnan emphasized the 'Vedantic spirituality' of man because such 'spirituality', according to Radhakrishnan, is contained in each religion. In contrast, Matilal feels that the critical analysis of one's own religion alone can bring about a perfect harmony among a variety of human nature and faiths; such a 'critical analysis', which Matilal calls the philosophy of religion, should be able to recognize the manifoldness of the human mind and the 'many-sidedness of the total truth' (or *anekāntavāda*, a Jaina terminology). Such a philosophy of religion will need a 'core of morality' of which there seems to be an equal resonance among all the great religions of the world:

> Let our philosophy of religion focus upon that *core of morality* and try to articulate, explain and elaborate it for everybody . . . Instead of saying that all religions talk of God just as all paths lead to Rome, I wish to say, each (great) religion starts from a common focal point, accepting a basic core of morality necessary for the survival and co-existence of the human species in this globe, and then it takes off in different directions with divergent metaphysical doctrines, beliefs, rituals, myths and behaviour norms.[8]

Amartya Sen finds this divergent and fresh view of Matilal an interesting contrast to that of Radhakrishnan.

> Whereas Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan examined and expounded classical Indian philosophy—including Hindu and Buddhist religious ideas—in ways that brought out sharp difference with Western philosophy, Bimal Matilal was engaged in a programme of re-examining the conceptual foundations of three thousand years of Indian analytical philosophy in the light of modern philosophy in the contemporary West.[9]

Matilal wanted to achieve a change in the conception of Western scholars about Indian philosophy and religion by proposing a programme which was different from both of his predecessors at Oxford. For this, he wanted 'to induce Western philosophers to study

[8]Introduction, p. 12.

[9]Amartya Sen: Address delivered on 6 June 1992, at the Commemoration held on the occasion of the first death anniversary of Professor Bimal Krishna Matilal, in All Souls College, Oxford.

it [classical Indian texts], no doubt in translation, as they study Aristotle, Kant, Descartes or Leibniz,'[10] a view that is echoed in Amartya Sen's assertion about the need to explore India's past from a logical and modern point of view.[11] In one of his earlier books Matilal has spoken of the relevance of classical Indian philosophical texts in modern context: 'The importance of the study of the Sanskrit philosophical texts in modern context can hardly be overemphasized, especially when even among the professional philosophers, students and research-workers of India today, study of Indian philosophy, in the way I conceive it here, has been much neglected and largely forgotten.'[12] Matilal was also conscious of the metaphysical and mystical dimensions of Indian thought, but he clearly demonstrated in his inaugural lecture at Oxford how logic and linguistics form the basis for mystical positions of India.

It is not surprising therefore that in his attempt to explain Indian philosophical views Matilal always gave a logical interpretation of the religious beliefs. Michael Dummett, one of Matilal's philosopher friends at Oxford, acknowledged the fact that

> the Indian religions at any rate—Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism—are, in their essence as religions closer to philosophy than the Western religions, which I take to be Judaism and its successors, Christianity and Islam. If you look at the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Koran, you will find in them very little, if anything, that could be called philosophical writing or in any philosophical style, . . . whereas in the Indian scriptures there is much that is of a philosophical character or touches very directly upon a philosophical style of thought. So the question, 'What is Indian philosophy, and how it

[10]Michael Dummett: Address delivered on 6 June 1992, at the Commemoration held on the occasion of the 1st Death Anniversary of Professor Bimal Krishna Matilal, in All Souls College, Oxford.

[11]Cf. Amartya Sen: 'The connections between modern philosophy and Graeco-Roman and Judaio-Christian thoughts have been much investigated, but the linkages with ancient Indian thinking have not received much attention. Matilal was interested in pursuing these connections for, I believe, two different reasons. First, they can help us to achieve a better understanding of the nature of the debates in these early Indian documents. Second, Matilal was also convinced—I believe rightly—that some of the ideas and the arguments well investigated in the Indian philosophical literature also have something to contribute to contemporary philosophical understanding.'

[12]*Logic, Language and Reality: An Introduction to Indian Philosophical Studies*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1985, p. xi.

should be evaluated?', is of crucial concern to anyone involved in studying Indian religion.[13]

Indian philosophy, according to Matilal, can contribute and participate in the discourse of global philosophy, and to achieve this end he tried to overcome the prejudice of Western Indologists and Orientalists by 'philosophizing' the classical Indian texts.[14]

Preparing a new edition of this book was neither difficult nor time-consuming as there was very little for me to do. I have, however, tried to update, in some cases correct, substitute and/or supply, the notes and references in the book. We have also shortened the title of the book and added a subtitle which, I think, more appropriately conveys the book's main premise.

I am grateful to Professor Sabyasachi Bhattacharya for accepting my suggestion to include this book in the Chronicle Classics Series of D.C. Publishers, and also for giving valuable advice in the editorial work of the volume. I wish to thank Mrs Karabi Matilal for accepting the offer to publish the book in this series and for trusting me with its editing. I would also like to thank Mr Aloke Roy Chowdhury and D.C. Publishers for agreeing to publish this important work.

Heeraman Tiwari
December 2003

[13]Michael Dummett: Address delivered on 6 June 1992, at the Commemoration held on the occasion of the first death anniversary of Professor Bimal Krishna Matilal, in All Souls College, Oxford.

[14]See J.N.Mohanty, *Relativism, Suffering and Beyond: Essays in Memory of Bimal K. Matilal*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 13–15.

Author's Preface

This book reproduces the series of 1978 Stephanos Nirmalendu Ghosh lectures which I delivered at the University of Calcutta in August-September, 1980. I wish to thank the Donor family, the Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar of the University of Calcutta, for allowing me this opportunity to go back to my old university and share my thoughts with my old friends, colleagues, teachers and students. My special thank is due to Mr. J. Oal who made my visit a very pleasant one, and to Mr. Saroj Malik who helped me in many ways during my visit.

It is a happy duty to thank all those who helped in preparing these lectures and finally the book. Professor Kalidas Bhattacharya has always encouraged me and stimulated my thoughts in numerous conversations and correspondences. A brief discussion with Professor Gopinath Bhattacharya was immensely satisfactory. Dr. G. Sastri's encouragement is kindly acknowledged. I received comments and criticisms from many who were present in the lectures. It goes without saying that the final version reflects my acceptance of many of these comments. I wish to thank specially Swami Lokeswarananda, Professors Naresh Chandra Chakrabarti, Kalikrishna Banerjee, N. B Chakrabarti, Pranab Kumar Sen, Pradyot Kumar Mukhopadhyay, D. P. Chattopadhyay, Salilaja Kumar Bhattacharya, Prabal Kumar Sen, Kisor Chakrabarti, and Dr. Sukumar Bose.

An invitation to the Indian Academy of Philosophy provided me with the opportunity to have discussion with Professors C. Bhattacharya, R. Das, S. Chakrabarti, Dr. Apala Chakrabarti, and Dr. Sandhya Basu.

I am very grateful to Swami Lokeswarananda who made my stay at the R. K. Mission Institute of Culture very enjoyable and rewarding.

To Arindam Chakrabarti special thanks are due for not only his help and comments but also his abiding interest in this book. And I am most grateful to Dr. S. Bose, Professor N. Chakrabarti and Sri Prabal Kumar Sen for their ungrudging help in seeing this book through the press. Without the help from the last it would have been impossible to publish this book.

Of my colleagues in Oxford, Professor Peter Strawson, Professor Basil Mitchell and Professor Hans Herzberger read portions of the book and made many important suggestions. I thankfully acknowledge their help.

I dedicate this book to three of my former teachers who taught me Nyāya and Indian Philosophy.

Bimal Krishna Matilal

All Souls College,
Oxford
19 March 1981

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: Indian Philosophy of Religion

'Indian Philosophy of Religion'—the main title of my Stephanos lectures—can also be rephrased as 'Philosophy of Indian Religions'. What I have tried to do in the course of these lectures is to develop an impressionistic outline of a sub-discipline 'philosophy of Indian religions' in the way I often envision it myself. Each philosopher is entitled to defend his approach or views. In such an attempt, it is not necessary for him to prove that all other approaches are wrong or misdirected, but rather to give enough reason to show why a particular approach appeals to his mind rationally, to his aesthetic sense as well as to his sense of propriety. This situation is as much true in the case of philosophies as it is in the case of religions.

Existence of different and divergent religious faiths is an undeniable fact and it is scandalous to claim that one religion is superior to all others. Such claims usually degenerate into quarrels expressed as 'My God is better than yours', which is only a caricature of the children's quarrel 'My dog is better than yours'. Therefore, in order to expand, explain and defend one's religious faith, one need not prove that all other religions are false or bad or both. But one can certainly give enough reason to show why a particular religion appeals to him aesthetically and rationally as well as to his sense of propriety. And in this matter, I wish to include even scepticism as a religion, for there are and always have been many sceptics and agnostics in our midst, and they may try to explain why scepticism rather than any particular faith appeals to them.

There does not exist, as far as I know, a well-defined discipline today called 'Indian Philosophy of Religion'. And I think that a beginning should be made. India is the original home for at least three or four

world religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. She also *houses* today many other world religions. Islam is the most prominent one, and besides, there have been Christians and Jews in India from very ancient times. If knowing a lot of science is helpful for developing a philosophy of science, knowing a lot of religions should be considered helpful in developing a philosophy of religion.

There are many ways of doing philosophy of religion as there are many ways of doing philosophy in general. I started these lectures by saying that ancient Indian culture not only admitted boldly, but also accommodated, the variety of human nature, variety of tastes, views, approaches etc. I wish to assert that there are many ways of which some appeal to me more than others, but for this reason I need not, and should not, claim even a fanciful superiority of one over the others.

The philosophy of religion, I wish to develop, should recognise this manifoldness of the human mind, this variety of equally viable views, even 'manysidedness of the total truth' (if I am allowed to borrow a term from the Jainas). At this stage, my imaginary friend, who always disagrees with me, will whisper: 'Well, truth is one and absolute. Hence if you allow relativism of this sort you have not seen the truth. Whether in metaphysics or in religion only one of them captures this truth.' Before I answer my friend, I wish to introduce another topic. The respected, honourable donor of these Stephanos lectures wanted to see that the title of each lecture series should weave around a common theme, that of showing that some fundamental truth is captured by different religious traditions of this world.

If we can discover the *deep structure*, so to say, of each great religious tradition, an awareness of the fundamental unity of man may emerge out of this discovery, which would be extremely valuable today, in fact priceless in a world where we have frequent cases of Moradabad, Middle-East, and Northern Ireland. By a strange coincidence, the intention of the donor for the Spalding Chair at Oxford was also similar. Mr. Spalding defined this as 'the aim of bringing together the world's great religions in closer understanding, harmony and friendship.'

Professor R. Zaehner, the second occupant of the chair, commented that such a procedure is commendable in a statesman, but how can a professor or a lecturer fulfil this purpose? Besides, to many intellectuals and academics, the study of comparative religion projects

the image of an unserious generalizer who is only too eager to say all religions are same. But the matter is not so simple. Zaehner, 16 years later, softened his position and thought that study of comparative religion can aim at creating a *symphony of faiths* (Gifford Lectures). This image is more appropriate and helpful, for it accounts for the distinctness and individual value of each religious tradition (just as a flute is different from a violin or a cello) but it can be made to tune in with the intended symphony. Dr. Radhakrishnan, our late President, thought that if we can emphasize the Vedantic spirituality of man (for, he believed, such a spirituality is contained in each religion) we can bring about the desired harmony. While I do not undervalue these two approaches, I wish to add that my approach to the problem is different. When I have explained this difference, I would be able to account for both, how my lectures here have been relevant to the theme of the Stephanos, and how my general academic activity is relevant to the duties of the Spalding Chair.

I consider myself a philosopher in the modern sense. Socrates said in his apology, 'The unexamined life is not worth living'. Sanskrit philosophers say, *yuktisiddhaṃ vaco grāhyam*. I wish to say, 'No unexamined religion is worth practising or worth studying'. Hence I have taken an intellectual approach to the study of religion, a philosophical approach, which explains the title of these lectures.

An old Chinese (or Buddhist) proverb says, 'You cannot see the forest because of the trees or trees because of the forest.' Similarly, it may be said, if the eight different lecture-topics are trees, how can we see the forest for the trees are blocking the vision? Where is the philosophy of religion in the midst of these disparate topics? Perhaps I shall cut some branches to make the forest visible.

My first topic started with the most common theme of all Indian religions, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism (perhaps, Sikhism): *Duḥkha*. I explained it as underlining the un-desirability or non-finality of the worldly life for persons who strive to discover a higher, better, greater and transcendent truth beyond all this. This explains the predominance of religiosity in many men. I have also underlined two points in that lecture. Indian traditional wisdom admits a variety of human minds, and consequently a variety of paths. If somehow the underlying principle of this attitude can be captured, intellectually explained and propagated, then perhaps peaceful co-existence of human species in this globe is possible. This however, seems to be an

impossible task. We all know that we have moved further and further away from the goal of unity of mankind. Whether at any time, we were any closer to the goal, I do not know.

The second point I have underlined was that regarding a set of basic moral doctrines. There seems to be surprisingly an agreement among the divergent traditions, among the great religions of the world about a 'core' morality. Let our philosophy of religion focus upon that *core of morality* and try to articulate, explain and elaborate it for everybody. If this could be successfully done, both the purposes, that of the Stephanos lectures and of the Spalding Chair, would be fulfilled. Instead of saying that all religions talk of God just as all paths lead to Rome, I wish to say, each (great) religion starts from a common focal point, accepting a basic core of morality necessary for the survival and co-existence of the human species in this globe, and then it takes off in different directions with divergent metaphysical doctrines, beliefs, rituals, myths and behaviour norms.

CHAPTER TWO

Duḥkha

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Most philosophical schools of classical India generally agree that this world as it is is nothing but suffering and pain, all our moments of pleasure being only pain in disguise. This thesis, which Professor Eliade has called 'The Pain-Existence equation', would be, if it is literally understood, akin to the philosophy of pessimism, except for the fact that each school talks about a way (*mārga*) to escape from this suffering, a way to the cessation of suffering. The question that I address myself to in this chapter is this: Is the 'pain' thesis a factual statement or an evaluative one? Is it, in other words, a proposition or an exclamation? A description of how things are or a prescription of how we ought to consider them?

I argue for the latter. This takes us into the contemporary discussion about fact and value in moral philosophy. The pertinent question is raised: whether there is any objective value (J. Mackie). It is suggested that if intersubjectivity is allowed a minimal grade of 'objectivity' (cf. Frege's 'Thought'), then the fact that diverse religious traditions seem to have agreement as regards certain basic moral strands would impart some 'objectivity to these basic moral propositions (no matter how difficult it would be to formulate them).

The Indian philosophers (notably the Buddhists) invariably call the pain thesis a *satya*, which is usually translated as '*truth*'. I argue that words such as '*satya*' and '*satya dharma*' are used in the Indian context ambiguously for both factual truths and evaluative exhortations. (*Rāma's* obeying of his father's command is equivalent to his maintaining of the 'truth'. Cf. *Satya-rakṣā*). This supports my contention that the pain thesis of the Indian philosophers is more a prescription

(for the *mumukṣu* 'those bent on achieving the goal of salvation') than a description, and in this respect it should be distinguished from the rather general proposition (factual) that there is an overabundance of suffering in this world and moments of happiness or happy things, if they exist at all, are but very few and far between.

'From the torment by three-fold misery arises the enquiry into the means of terminating it; if it be said that it is fruitless, the means being obvious to us, we reply no, since in such means there is no certainty or finality.'

With these words, Iśvara-Kṛṣṇa begins his *Sāmkhya-Kārikā*, and this verse may be taken as the *locus classicus* of the theme of the universal suffering which permeates almost all religious philosophies of India,[1] *Sarvaṃ duḥkham*. Spinoza begins his *On the Improvement of the Understanding*, showing, presumably, why he turns to philosophy:[2]

'After experience had taught me that all the usual surroundings of ordinary life are vain and futile; seeing that none of the objects of my fears contained in themselves anything either good or bad, except in so far as the mind is affected by them, I finally resolved to inquire whether there might by some real good having power to communicate itself, which would affect the mind singly, to the exclusion of all else: whether, in fact, there might be anything of which the discovery and attainment would enable me to enjoy continuous, supreme and unending happiness.'

The Buddha, when he was a young prince surrounded by wealth, luxury and sensual pleasures, began to ponder over the problem of disease, decay and death—the problem of life—and asked in puzzlement, 'How knowing our inevitable fate—disease, decay and death, can one forget and try to be happy with pleasures that are so fragile?' This initial puzzlement eventually led him to the path of achieving the deepest insight about the essentially 'conditioned' nature of human existence. The goal of *nirvāṇa* was, therefore, freedom from, i.e., the cessation of, this utterly conditioned, essentially determined, existence—a breaking away from the prison-house—a goal which can *only metaphorically* be called 'the unending happiness' (*per contra* Spinoza).

These very different philosophers from very different periods of human history and different parts of the globe seem to agree on at least one point. Our life in this world as it is given to us does not

[1]Iśvara Kṛṣṇa, Verse I.

[2]Spinoza, p. 1.

make any sense, does not seem to have the value we tend to attach to it, and hence is unacceptable as it stands. Borrowing from another great philosopher, Socrates, I wish to put this point as: the unexamined life is not worth living.[3] A sober examination or search for the *meaning* of life imparts a sombre lesson, or at least, it has done so to many who are honoured as the original thinkers of mankind. The lesson is: life appears to be absurd. Thomas Nagel's[4] essay on 'The Absurd' seems to strike a familiar note that is deep-seated in the Indian consciousness: life is a burden, an absurd cage from which the bird must fly to the forest for freedom. Some philosophers would stop at the absurd and try not to be tormented by it (cf. Russell's 'Freeman's worship').[5] But there are religious optimists in both East and West, who would argue that life is empty, yes, unless, of course, we posit (or believe in) something else—something of a different nature, something that may circumscribe life and impart a worthwhile meaning to it. The pain thesis of the Indian religious philosophers—the thesis which Mircea Eliade[6] has called the 'Pain-existence equation' and which says that ordinary worldly life is a burden *tout court, heya,* an unacceptable drag, *duḥkha,* something that deserves to be rejected *tout ensemble*—is to be set as I see it in this broader context of our search for the significance of life.

Some Westerners have tried to characterize Indian religions as being pessimistic while others think that this concept of universal suffering is something like a concept of universal boredom:[7] the Indian religious person gets bored with his life (the way some of us do in a modern affluent American society) and hence tries to drop out. An example of a more shallow non sequitur than the latter interpretation is difficult to find. Professor R. M. Hare once said that to defend Christianity it is sometimes better to defend religion to general, for 'You cannot understand what Christianity is, until you have understood what religion is.' (B. Mitchell ed.)[8] Although I shall not try to defend Indian religions, for that is not my purpose here, I wish to add 'You cannot understand what Indian religions are until you have understood what the pain-thesis means'.

[3]Plato, *Apology,* 38a.
[4]Nagel, T., p. 21.
[5]Russell, B., *Mysticism and Logic,* pp. 44–54.
[6]Eliade, M., p. 11–15.
[7]Danto, A. C., pp. 53ff.
[8]Mitchell, B., p. 15.

Some try to counter the point made about Indian religions being pessimistic by pointing out that in the early scriptures, the Vedas and the Upaniṣads, the theme of *duḥkha* is seldom met with, if at all. Early Vedic religion, it is true, was more concerned with our life in this world than with a life-beyond, and in this respect it was similar to early Judaism where a concern for the after-life is conspicuous by its absence. But this consideration hardly throws any light on why with the rise of the *śramaṇa* schools, Buddhism, Jainism and Ājivikism, *duḥkha* became an all-important concept not only in the Śramaṇa tradition but also in *brāhmaṇa* schools, such as Śāṁkhya, Vaiśeṣika and Nyāya. Why, we cannot explain; but we can try to understand its significance in a soteriological context which was provided by all these schools in some form or other.

2.2 THE PAIN-THESIS

What is *duḥkha*? It is means simply suffering, unhappiness and pain, then the question seems trivial. If it means in addition the abundance of pain in life, then also there need be no philosophic worry about it. It will be pointed out there is no difficulty in finding an unhappy person or a sufferer, for, in fact, everybody is so in some way or other. Kisā Gautami who lost her child was asked by the Buddha to get some mustard seeds from a house where nobody was unhappy. For then the Buddha could, so he said, revive her child with the magic of those mustard seeds. But Kisā was unable to find such a place. The moral is: unhappiness is and has always been all pervasive. We do not need philosophic consideration to show that suffering is ubiquitous. David Hume expressed it admirably:[9]

'Were a stranger to drop on a sudden into this world, I would show him as a specimen of its ills, a hospital full of diseases, a prison crowded with malefactors and debtors, a field of battle strewed with carcasses, a fleet floundering in the ocean, a nation languishing under tyranny, famine or pestilence. To turn to the gay side of life to him and give him a notion of its pleasures—whither should I conduct him? To a ball, to an opera, to court? He might justly think that I was only showing him a diversity of distress and sorrow'.

(Hume, 1779, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*).

Suffering is a fact of life. From this empirical premise is developed,

[9]Hume, D., *Dialogues*, Part X, p. 488.

it seems, the thesis of universal *duḥkha*—where the term '*duḥkha*' I suggest, is no longer a descriptive term and hence is hardly translatable as suffering. Among other things, it may be pointed out that in so far as the denotation or extension of the term *duḥkha* is extended to include what cannot ordinarily be called *duḥkha*, the sense or connotation of the term must also undergo some radical modification. When '*duḥkha*' becomes an universal predicate, its descriptive aspect, I think, becomes overshadowed by its evaluative function. '*Duḥkha*' in other words, is turned into, in addition, an *evaluative* expression.

2.3 NAIYĀYIKAS ON THE PAIN-THESIS

The pain-thesis is more a statement of value than a statement of fact. This interpretation receives ample support from certain remarks of ancient Naiyāyikas such as Vātsyāyana[10] and Uddyotakara, to which I shall now turn.

Under NS 1.1.9, which supplies a list of *prameyas*, 'objects of knowledge', a question is raised: Why in the list only *duḥkha* (= pain) is mentioned and not *sukha* (= happiness)? Vātsyāyana answers that this need not be construed as meaning that happiness or pleasure is nothing but pain. It means, according to Vātsyāyana, that Akṣapāda intended to carry or communicate a special instruction, viz., the following: our life, which is admittedly a means to pleasure and happiness, is also inextricably mixed with unhappiness, suffering and pain. This being so, those who want to escape from suffering as such *should*, according to Akṣapāda, intensely contemplate and recognise that all experiences, no matter whether pleasant or unpleasant, are *duḥkha*, undesirable and unacceptable. If one can so recognise, argues Vātsyāyana, one can mediate upon it, and by meditation in this way, one can be indifferent to it; and through such indifference one would become unattached to this life, and this non-attachment would lead one to escape from it.

Uddyotakara, under *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.21, points out that nobody can deny that happiness exists and that pleasant experiences are also facts. But, he continues, a person who is intent on escape or *mokṣa*, is usually unable to consider everything to be *duḥkha*, for as an ordinary human being, he would normally run after what is pleasant and away from what is painful. This is the *lokamaryādā* or the way of the world. It is only in such a context, that the teaching of Akṣapāda that everything

[10]Vātsyāyana, under *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.9.

is, i.e., should be considered as *duḥkha*, becomes meaningful. In fact, I suggest that the teaching (*upadésa*) of Akṣapāda be interpreted as a 'speech-act' (in the sense of Austin and Searle) uttered to produce some effect upon those who are working for escape. In other words, the perlocutionary effect of the illocutionary act of *upadeśa* or instruction (cf. Searle)[11] is to persuade those disciples (*mumukṣu*) to believe and acknowledge that everything, both pleasure and pain, are *duḥkha* and *heya*, undesirable and unacceptable.

These considerations of Vātsyāyana and Uddyotakara seem to indicate that 'everything is *duḥkha*', i.e. the pain-thesis, is neither a truth that is obvious nor a factual belief. It can be better understood as an evaluative sentence, as I have already suggested. It is not claimed to be true in some 'purely objective/factual' sense. If it is claimed to be true at all, it is so only in some 'non-objective' (= subjective) sense for the persons who have already decided to be *mumukṣu*, i.e. to work for their salvation, or escape 'from this rat-race'.

The pain-thesis is, let me say, *true* for a particular group of persons called *mumukṣu*. It is also admitted that at any given time in human society, not everybody is a *mumukṣu*. For people have by nature different inclinations or 'tastes': *bhinnarucir hi lokaḥ*. Almost the same point is made by the Indian philosophers when they argue that there are at least two acceptable and normal ways of life with divergent goals or values. One is called the path of active life (*pravṛtti*), and the other the path of renunciation (*nivṛtti*). As early as the *Ṛgvedas*, we see hymns which are meant to secure prosperity in life (a rare thing for a religion to endorse prosperity unabashedly and not to say that the rich will never go through the eye of needle to the other side, the Kingdom of Heaven) side by side with hymns that glorify asceticism and renunciation. (Calvinism along with its protestant ethic provides another notable exception). *Vedāntasūtras* 3.4.2–7 inform us that Jaimini contended that renunciation or self-mortification was no part of our normal 'Vedic' life.[12] Later thinkers, however, made a compromise and claimed that one way is compatible with the other, the path of action and hedonism (even the hedonism that is described and endorsed by the Cārvākas and the *Kāma-sūtras*) with that of renunciation and asceticism. Indian mythology, therefore, is saturated with the so-called paradoxically of asceticism and eroticism

[11]Searle, J. R., p. 25.

[12]Śaṃkara under *Brahmasūtras*, 3.4.2–7.

(O'Flaherty)[13] which admirably mirrors the tension between the two. The synthesis between them, which the later thinkers preached, gradually became the established norm, whereby it was believed that the path of self-mortification should not be more self-denial and that of action need not be simply hedonistic and selfish. Instead of presenting it as paradoxical, I wish to underline this feature as a point of paramount significance, viz. the bold recognition that human nature is manifold and is expressed through diverse values, ways of thinking, acting and feeling.

2.4 RELATIVISM AND THE PAIN-THESIS

To come back to the pain-thesis. Let me explain what I mean by saying that it is 'true for some people'. To say that a proposition 'p' is true for 'x', 'y', and 'z', but not for us, is to render the truth-value status of 'p' extremely dubious. (What is true for an Arab, may not be so for a Hindu or a Christian—a claim like this is, to say the least, controversial). Our 'p' cannot stand for some report about the private condition (say 'pain') of 'x', for what is private to 'x' is not available to 'y' or 'z'. If 'p' stands for some factual belief in this case, then it has already been censured. For certainly, there can hardly be allowed such disagreement or relativism in factual beliefs, assuming, of course, that there is a core of facts which we human beings commonly encounter and share. By saying '"p" is true for them, not for us', we simply imply, though not explicitly, that they are deluded to believe 'p'; for 'p', in fact, is false and not just 'false for us', for it violates, otherwise the robust sense of what we call 'facts'. Now, if the pain-thesis is claimed to be true for those who are working for the kind of salvation the Indian philosophers talked about, it is only claimed that it is not a factual belief of the above kind. Hence, in making this claim, I do not judge it to be false (which I would have to do if I claimed it to be a factual belief of the above kind), nor do I insinuate that the *mumukṣus* are deluded in their belief about the pain-thesis or its necessary consequence, *nirvāṇa* as the goal. The claim is rather that as an evaluative statement the thesis has a persuasive effect, and its being right or wrong should not be judged in the way the truth and falsity of a factual belief is judged.

The term *'duḥkha'* has an experiential connotation in ordinary

[13]O'Flaherty, W. (1973), pp. 4–11.

language. But an experiential interpretation of the pain-thesis runs into problems. Under *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.21, Uddyotakara[14] refers to an opponent's view, which maintains that everything is *duḥkha* by nature (*'sarvaṃ svarūpato duḥkham'*) and rejects it by saying that it contradicts our perceptual experience, for it is impossible to deny pleasure and happiness as facts of experience. The opponent, of course, may argue that such experiential happiness is only a special variety of unhappiness. (Remember in Hume's account our friendly stranger was said to be thinking that an opera or a ball is only a variety of distress and sorrow). Uddyotakara answers that we seldom allow items denoted by the contradictory or contrary term to be included within the extension of the original term to which it is contrary or contradictory. A non-blue thing cannot be denoted by the term 'blue', or a non-pot (a cloth) cannot be denoted by 'pot'. The pain-thesis is therefore to be regarded as evaluative in the sense that we are supposed to attach *negative* values, if we are *mumukṣu*, to all varieties of happiness, sensual pleasures and joys of life. As Maitreyī asked, what shall I do with that which will not bring me immortality (*'Yenāham nāmṛtā syāṃ kim ahaṃ tena kuryām'*).[15]

If the pain-thesis is non-factual in the sense I am arguing here, it is not falsifiable by citation of any apparent counter-example. In fact the pain-thesis shares several features in common with moral propositions. First, truth or falsity does not seem to be directly relevant to it. Second, like most moral propositions, it can be expressed in the imperative mood (in fact, that is how it is enjoined in some texts); consider (*bhāvaya*) everything to be *duḥkha*. To make the injunction (or imperative mood) significant we have to presuppose some fact, viz. that not everybody normally regards everything to be pain. If everybody did so already, the instruction would be pointless (*upadeśavaiyarthya*). No teacher will instruct, for example, 'Breathe always, if you wish to live', for we all do so already.

An instruction such as the pain-thesis, however, presupposes much more. It presupposes that there are people like Maitreyī or Socrates for whom the unexamined life is not worth living. It presupposes that this world and our existence in it are *not*, for some people, ultimately valuable or an end in itself and that these people refuse to admit that this is all that there is and consider our worldly happiness, for whatever reason, as unattractive or empty or absurd. If this is not all

[14]Uddyotakara, under *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.21.

[15]*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 4.5.4.

that there is, these people argue, let us find out what else there is. Considering all this, it seems that the Lokāyata condemnation of the pain-thesis as being morbid and false is wild and widely off the mark. For the instruction of the pain-thesis is meant for the people whom I have just described. Referring to R. M. Hare again,[16] I would like to say that some people seem to have a *blik*, a fundamental principle somehow internalised—a principle by which they live and in accordance with which they interpret experience—and it is for them that the pain thesis is recommended.

From what has been said, it may be argued that the pain-thesis is non-experiential, i.e., it is neither experientially verifiable nor falsifiable. But this will not carry the implication that is intended by my characterization of it as non-factual. Besides, depending upon what is meant by the term 'experiential', it can be argued that for the *arhats* or saints, everything, every worldly thing, is experientially painful or *duḥkha*. It has been claimed by such Buddhists as Dharmakīrti that a yogin *perceives* i.e., experiences, everything to be not only in a flux but also *duḥkha* (undesirable as pain is) and empty.[17]

The Nyāya interpretation of the pain-thesis that I have so far expounded seems to me to be quite compatible with the Sāmkhya-Yoga interpretation (cf. *Yogasūtra* II. 15 states 'for the *vivekin* every phenomenal existence is pain').[18] It may be objected, however, that my description of the pain-thesis as non-factual does not do justice to the first noble/great truth of Buddhism. For, after all, the pain-thesis is spoken of here as the great truth or *ārya satya* and even certain arguments are formulated to establish this truth. Hence the proposition, the argument continues, may not be an obvious one or experientially valid, but it is a 'truth' to be discovered, more or less, like the scientific truths which we discover after rejecting the obvious as mere appearance. I think this argument is misleading and I shall explain my position presently.

2.5 IS IT NON-FACTUAL?

Let me first concentrate on the adjective 'non-factual'. My own thesis is a negative one, not positive, viz., the pain-thesis is non-factual. Like

[16]See Mitchell, B., p. 2.

[17]Dharmottara interprets *'bhūtārtha'* in *Nyāyabinduṭīkā* 1.11 as four noble truths. Durveka-Miśra explains that the first truth is the truth of *duḥkha* and so on. See Dharmakīrti, p. 67.

[18]Patañjali, *Yogasūtra*, 2.15.

Dinnāga's *apoha*, it says what the pain-thesis *is not, not what it is*: it is certainly to be distinguished from the extreme subjectivist view of religious beliefs—the view that holds that religious propositions are all reports of one's own (subjective) feelings and attitude—for that is a positive thesis. The extreme subjectivist, however, will have to agree with my thesis. For his position entails, but is not entailed by, my position. I share with the subjectivist one main concern, that of explaining why most people believe, as they do, and erroneously so, that pain-thesis is factual or objective. But my job ends there unlike that of the subjectivist.

It may be countered, at this point, that it could simply be a *fact* that life as characterised by pursuit of pleasure and escape from pain does not satisfy men. It could be true for everyone, not only for the *mumukṣu*, though only he recognises it. In reply to this objection, I wish to make two further points clear. First I wish to concede the obvious: under certain metaphysical assumptions about the goal and 'meaning', of life, the pain-thesis can undoubtedly be regarded as factual. If, for example, every man desires *nirvāṇa* then to the extent his worldly life is antagonistic to this goal, the pain-thesis, all is *duḥkha*, would be both factual and evaluative.[19] My denial of the factuality of the pain-thesis is, therefore, a qualified denial. Second, I find the following view very plausible and attractive. *Duḥkha* can be seen as man's sense of alienation from his own essence or 'own-being' (*svabhāva*) or ultimate nature. The deep feeling of purposelessness and absurdity of life (T. Nagel) is then derived, in this theory, from this sense of estrangement and the goal then would be *nirvāṇa*, cessation of the estrangement. And the pain-thesis in this way obtains a factual character. But my argument here is against such claims as undermine totally its evaluative character.

2.6 THE BUDDHIST THESIS OF PAIN

The Buddhist distinguishes three different formulations of the pain-thesis. The first is called: *duḥkha-duhkḥa*, and this expresses obviously a factual proposition. And I do not dispute it. The second is a more

[19]This point has been made by B. Mitchell in a private correspondence 'Given an eudaemonistic ethic (of Plato and Aristotle and, indeed, Aquinas) the *fact* that all men desire eudaemania or *nirvāṇa*, would entail ethical imperatives. So understood 'all is *duḥkha*' would be both factual and evaluative.

general proposition: *anityatā-duḥkha*. Each bit of experience (including the happy ones) is (should be regarded as) pain because it is in a flux or momentary in nature, and hence invites more psychological worries. This is how, at least, the second formulation is defended generally with a sort of argument. It is claimed that even a pleasant feeling is necessarily characterised by an awareness that this pleasure will not last. This claim may or may not be experientially valid. But I have no quarrel here. The parallel Nyāya argument seems to be more practical and less ambiguous, for it says that pleasures are like honey covering up the fatal poison of sorrows, and hence our part of the deal (if we want unmixed happiness) would be to reject them as a whole package (Vātsyāyana).[20] My only hesitation in accepting the Buddhist argument based on 'transience' is that in that case the pain-thesis would be grounded on a psychological and hedonistic basis. For unless I want to believe in 'the more the merrier' principle about pleasure, why should I worry about the transience of it? It will not do to point out that pleasures are *factually* transient and that men *do* worry about such things, for my question is: whether they should? If they should not, then they need not consider pleasure as pain, no matter what.

If the status of the second formulation is dubious as regards fact or value, the third formulation: *saṃskāra-duḥkha*, can, I think, be seen as evaluative quite clearly. It says: our entire conditioned existence is pain. There seems to be an argument implicit in it: our psychosomatic existence is (should be) regarded as pain because it is conditioned. But such an argument becomes significant only if we posit a *nirvāṇa* or an 'unconditioned' something that is not death. We are back to our old theme: the *meaning* of life is to be sought by positing something that circumscribes it and transcends it. The first great truth is inextricably tied to the third great truth of Buddhism. '*Duḥkha*' loses its significance except in the context of *nirvāṇa*. The empirical needs the help of the non-empirical to gain a meaning, and hence the meaning must be non-empirical. Or, to see the point in another way, the noble truth is a truth of ethics and religion rather than of metaphysics.

2.7 FACT *vs* VALUE

Moral philosophers since Hume have talked about there being a gap (bridgeable or unbridgeable) between fact and value, between

[20]Vātsyāyana, *Nyāyabhāṣya* under *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.2.

description and evaluation. The controversy over the derivability of 'ought'-statements from 'is'-statements is too well-known in modern times to be repeated here. Although I am not directly concerned with the moral 'ought', obviously the discussion in moral philosophy have some relevance here. If the pain-thesis is evaluative, then it is relevant to consider in this context what view we take about moral values. The question of connection between religion and morality has often been viewed in the West as one of whether or not some form of theological doctrine can supply the required objectivity of ethical prescriptions. The problem is as old as Plato *Euthyphro* dilemma.[21] It is good because God loves or commands it, or God loves what is good because it is good. Generally the second view is preferred but Wittgenstein has remarked:

> I think that the first conception is the deeper one: Good is what God orders. For this cuts off the path to any and every explanation 'why' it is good while the second conception is precisely the superficial, the rationalistic one, which proceeds as if what is good could still be given some foundation.[22]

Mackie has argued that the second alternative reduces God to 'a capricious tyrant' while the first alternative makes ethics 'autonomous' and has the consequence that 'we can simply close the theological frontier of ethics' (p. 230). But the possible relations between religion and morality are not my main concern here. It might be that the theistic position about morality, or Buddhism or Vedanta is a coherent position in that it demands of men only that they should live in what will be, for them, *the most satisfying way*. But to claim that a position is coherent is not to claim that it is correct or true. If there are more than one coherent positions formulated or given it is still not fair to claim that at least one of them is correct. For coherence is only a necessary, not a sufficient condition for truth. If one of the religions is both coherent and correct then, as Mackie has argued, the theological frontier of ethics remain open. But the pertinent question is: What is the most satisfying way for everyman? Or, should there be only one for all without exception?

Let me get back to my specific theme. The pain-thesis, to be sure, is a religious doctrine, not a moral one. But it involves value, and its

[21] Plato, however, states the dilemma as follows: 'If what is holy because the gods approve it or do they approve it because it is holy?' *Euthyphro 10a*.

[22] Wittgenstein, 1965, p. 15.

counterpart claim, i.e., the *nirvāṇa* is the supreme good, is on a par with ordinary value-statements. An important position in ethical philosophy is that for value-statements truth or falsity is irrelevant. This position was commonly endorsed by the Greek sophists (not a very reputable authority in moral matters as Plato would have us believe) as well as by Hobbes and Hume. In the present century the problem used to be vigorously discussed in the thirties and forties, but recently this position has been very carefully and convincingly argued by J. L. Mackie in his book *Ethics*, which begins with a forceful statement: 'There are no objective values'.[23]

If the pain-thesis is evaluative, then it lacks, I must claim, objectivity in Mackie's sense. In other words, my position about the pain-thesis is entailed by, though it does not entail, the general position of Mackie. If there are no objective values then indeed the religious values are not objective, but it is possible even if the religious values are non-factual that moral and other values be objective. The non-factuality of the pain-thesis, therefore, is not incompatible with, for example, the Kantian view of morality. One main problem of distinguishing the religious from the moral is, of course, the fact that in any developed religions such as Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and Judaism, certain moral assertions are already incorporated into the pattern of belief. There is always what Ninian Smart[24] has called a 'weaving-together' between the religious and the moral strands, but there is also another fact that is not much emphasised in religious discourses. There is, to put it crudely, some core of morality or moral doctrines that is commonly shared by most developed religions, although it is extremely hard to separate and identify this core in the overgrowth of individual religious dogmas. Now the morality that constitutes this 'core' is somewhat better off than the purely religious dogmas or prescriptions or values. For this morality has at least some claim to objectivity much in the same way as for example inter-subjective experience has a better claim to objectivity than our private experiences, for this morality is in some sense 'inter-religious'. [E.g. Frege's *thought* is argued to be somewhat more objective than private images because of its inter-subjectivity] But the variant religious values seem to be on a par with private experience.

[23]Mackie, J. L. *Ethics*, p. 15 and pp. 227–32.
[24]N. Smart, *Reasons and Faiths*, pp. 179–96.

2.8 RELIGION AND MORALITY

There is another obvious way by which the religious strand can be distinguished from the moral strand. While the religious prescriptions and values are patently seen to be relative to particular religions or religious traditions, with regard to morality such relativism is often denied as being counter-intuitive. It is at least argued that some basic principles of morality are (or ought to be) recognised to be common in all human societies although the specific moral rules may vary. A trivial example will show how we are ready to give a status to the moral different from that of the religious. Someone asks his new friend who came from another country, and who happens to be a vegetarian, 'Are you a vegetarian on moral grounds or on religious grounds'? If the answer is on moral grounds, then he may continue to argue (as I myself once did with the late Dr. V. Raghavan) to show his friend that it is not immoral to eat meat for such and such reasons. The obvious assumption in entering such an argument is that there may be some agreement between them about some general moral principle or principles which may eventually support vegetarianism or its opposite. But if the answer is on religious ground, then the argument usually stops there. For it becomes immediately obvious that the person made the choice himself already or the choice was made for him by his guru or parents or forefathers. (Vegetarianism can be justified on other objective grounds, no doubt, but that is not my concern here).

Moral propositions, it is true, are often incorporated into the doctrinal schemes of major religions and thereby they acquire the status of being also religious propositions. They may or may not lack objectivity. Wittgenstein called them 'absolutely judgements of value'.[25] But the pain-thesis belong to the religious strand which, I think, is relative and variable. Some examples of such religious prescriptions would be: 'Worship God every Sunday', 'Say Grace', 'The Brahmin should take a dip in the river every morning'. 'The Buddhist monk should meditate daily', etc. Such prescriptions vary from religion to religion and should be distinguished from the moral or the religious-moral. Wittgenstein distinguishes relativism from morality in the following example:[26]

[25]Wittgenstein, 1965, pp. 5–6.
[26]Ibid., p. 5.

Supposing that I could play tennis and one of you saw me playing and said 'Well, you play pretty badly' and suppose I answered 'I know, I am playing badly but I don't want to play any better,' all the other man could say would be 'Ah, then that is all right'. But suppose I had told one of you a preposterous lie and he came up to me and said, 'You are behaving like a beast' and then I were to say 'I know I behave badly, but then I don't want to behave any better,' could he then say 'Ah, then that's all right',? Certainly not, he would say 'Well, you ought to want to behave better'.

With regard to morality therefore my friend can, with justification say what I ought to do if I do not do it or behave that way, but with regard to my choice about playing tennis badly, he cannot, with some justification, tell me that I ought to play better. Let us take a religious example. If I start taking a dip in the river every winter morning because of religious reasons, my friend can warm me, 'You will catch cold'. I can then reply, 'I do not really care, for I am doing a religious (non-moral) duty'. Here again, my friend cannot, with the same justification, tell me that I ought not to behave that way. Religious prescriptions therefore are on a par with the judgement of relative value.

Wittgenstein said that every judgement of relative value can be shown to be 'mere statements of facts'. If this is true then the pain-thesis and similar religious statements being relative would, by the same token, be 'factual'. And this would mean that my claim that they are non-factual has to be given up. This brings us close to what seems to be another knotty philosophic controversy: What is to count as fact? I do not think what I have claimed goes against what Wittgenstein meant. One way to see this is to appeal to a distinction that is made by some moral philosophers (cf. Searle)[27] between 'brute facts' and 'institutional facts'. My claim is that the religious statements of the kind we are discussing here do not express 'brute facts' and if Wittgenstein's 'World-book' of facts contains only 'brute facts' then the pain-thesis will not be included there. An institutional fact involves judgements of good or bad relative to certain standard defined by the institution ('He is a good tennis player'), as well as prescriptions, duties, and obligations. Each religion is such an institution. Hence people within such a religion regard many propositions as factual. They are 'factual' of course from the point of view of the institution itself, but 'non-factual' from the point of view of 'brute facts' or another institution with different 'constitutive' rules. This point also illuminates

[27]Searle, J., pp. 50–53.

at least one part of my previous argument, for it was part of my duty to explain why most people take the pain-thesis and similar propositions as 'factual'. In ordinary language we do objectify religious values. We do not ordinarily make *value-claim* but *truth-claim*. Not only was the Buddha's description of the pain-thesis as 'great truth' in line with this tendency (for he was to be sure teaching ordinary people) but also in the popular epics of India, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, both religious and moral duties were often described as the maintenance of the *satya* (=truth) and the *dharma*. Rāma's going to the forest to obey his father's command was 'the keeping of his father's truth (*satya* = promise)'! In modern language, this would be an obligation demanded by the constitutive rules of the institution of promise. What I have tried here is to disentangle some meanings of these proverbially ambiguous terms, *satya* (=truth) and *dharma* (= duty).

Purely moral propositions, though they may be swamped with religious fervour as they are mostly incorporated into a web of religious beliefs, would, however, be different. They would be in the sense of Wittgenstein's 'absolute judgement of value'. Kant held that moral judgements are categorical imperatives. Or, sometimes it is argued that they are applications of one categorical imperative.[28] A categorical imperative is one whose action-directing force is unconditional in the sense of not being contingent upon any present desire of the agent. In other words, the recommended action cannot be a means to the present desire of the agent. If satisfaction of such desire can be imputed, the imperative is no longer categorical in Kantian sense. The religious imperatives, or at least the kinds of religious imperatives (non-moral and variant) we are concerned with here, are obviously hypothetical imperatives. They can be analysed as: 'If you want X, you ought to do (or do) Y'. *Aśvamedhena yajeta svargakāma*: The Vedic scriptures clearly formulates injunctions of this type: 'If you want to go to heaven, you ought to perform horse-sacrifice'. With very little ingenuity, we may formulate the following: First the pain-thesis—'If you want cessation or *nirodha*, you ought to consider your conditioned existence as pain/undesirable'. Second—the *Brahma-jijñāsā*: 'If you want *mokṣa*, you ought to enquire after the Brahman' (*Vedānta-Sūtra* 1.1.1). Although such formulations of the instructions (*upadeśa*) are

[28]This story of the *Mahābhārata* once created a great controversy between Bankimchandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore. Both wrote several articles, the first supporting Kṛṣṇa while the second showing his misgivings about the implication of such a position.

accepted normally, one can, however, argue that desire for *mokṣa* or *nirvāṇa* is not on a par with ordinary desire and the above interpretations are objectionable. If this objection is valid, and if it can be shown that the recommended course of action is not a means to satisfy any desire that the agent is supposed to have, then the above two religious doctrines become categorical imperatives in the Kantian sense and hence form a class by themselves along with the moral judgements.

Can such religious judgements, as can be treated as categorical imperatives, be, by the same token, called moral judgements? Does not the imposed distinction between the moral and the religious vanish under such condition? I do not have any straight answer to such questions. But it seems to me counter-intuitive to confuse a religious prescription for one's own salvation with a moral prescription. To put the matter crudely, to the extent I speak the truth without caring for any reward or result or for avoidance of any trouble, etc., I act morally. But to the extent I do so to please some deity or to obtain religious merit, or even to achieve my own, selfish, salvational goal, I perform a religious act. In the old *Mahābhārata* story, the sage Kauśika, who used to tell always the truth in order to go to heaven, told the robbers the truth and thereby helped them to kill an innocent man. At the end of his life, the story continues, Kauśika failed to reach his coveted goal. If any moral is to be derived, one may say that his action was morally reprehensible, though it was flawless as a religious act, in, at least, the commonly understood sense of the term. This is, at least, how I would understand and interpret Śrī Kṛṣṇa's reason for disapproving Kauśika's action. Morality is higher than religion. Or should we say that the essence of religion is morality, and hence to practice religion without morality is to care for the chaff while the kernel is lost?

There are obviously many complicated issues involved here—controversies over which I must forbear to enter in this book. Kṛṣṇa's position about the priority of non-killing over non-lying may be challenged by a follower of Rāma (as he is depicted to be the *satya-sandha* Rāma in the *Rāmāyaṇa*), whose devotion to truth would take priority over non-killing. Or a Kantian may prefer the moral principle of speaking the truth unconditionally no matter whatever the consequences may be. Kauśika, it might be argued from this point of view, was morally right in telling the truth and thereby courting failure to achieve his desired goal. But the point of the Kauśika story

is not that he deliberately acted in complete disregard of the consequences, viz., harm to himself or others. The point is rather that he acted in complete awareness of the consequences. He knew that an innocent person would be killed and that this was the only way by which he could keep his vow of non-lying. His vow of non-lying was supposed to serve his self-interest, to be instrumental for achieving his religious goal, heaven or his salvation. Hence, I think, he was not following the moral principle in the Kantian fashion.

Another broad criticism of the position I am trying to outline and defend here may take the following line. It may be argued that I have chosen a very narrow concept of religion, in order to contrast it with morality. A religion that is associated with pleasing a deity, or with heaven or hell, is a lower form of religion. One can speak of 'higher' forms of religion where the goal is *nirvāṇa*, or as the case may be, salvation or mystical union with the divinity. And such a higher form of religion, the argument continues, need not be rated below morality, for morality would be an integral part of it. In reply I would say that if the notion of some super-religion includes what we call morality as its integral part one does not need to dispute such a claim, for it boils down to a dispute over the two labels only, 'religion' and 'morality'. (cf. *nāma-mātre vivādaḥ paryavasitaḥ*). But religion as it is given to us in different religious traditions is usually dominated by different scriptural injunctions and commandments, which are assumed to be absolute and inflexible. An act becomes irreligious under this view if it violates any such injunction. This so-called narrow notion of religion is at least accepted generally as a working hypothesis. There are at least two broad characteristics that mark out the nature of an act that is religious in this sense from that of a moral act: (a) it is given or approved by a religious tradition, and (b) it is dominated by a concern for one's own good, a religious goal such as *nirvāṇa*, salvation, mystical union or heaven. An act would be moral, even if it is approved by a religious tradition, provided it is dominated by a concern for one's fellow men and by a corresponding lack of concern for self-interest. If there were only one being on earth, it is conceivable that he can perform a religious act, but he cannot ordinarily perform a moral act. If it is argued that there may be a *truly* religious person, a Buddha or a Yudhiṣṭhira, who would be prepared to give up his entry into *nirvāṇa* or salvation for the sake of the suffering humanity, then we are no longer talking about ordinary traditional religion. We have rather put forward a concept of religion which is inclusive of such morality as

Kṛṣṇa in the above-mentioned case argued to be more valuable and hence more adorable than what is ordinarily understood as religion by most among us.

2.9 OBJECTIVITY OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

I am now on the final, and perhaps the most controversial part of my argument. In analysing the pain-thesis, an important doctrine commonly shared by all Indian religions, I have engaged myself in finding whether some light can be thrown upon the nature of certain types of religious propositions to which the pain-thesis belongs. I have argued that this type of religious propositions are 'non-factual' in the sense of being evaluative and relative to each doctrinal scheme. I have also shown similarity (as well as differences) of this type of religious propositions with purely moral propositions, and how in any given religious scheme they are interwoven internally. I have argued that religious prepositions of this type can be based upon what are called 'institutional facts' but never entirely upon 'brute facts'. But what is to count as a fact, even a 'brute' fact? I have raised the question before, but have not discussed it.

Some may argue that this talk of objectivity or factuality, or the lack of it depends heavily upon the unexamined and highly ambiguous notion of brute facts. It is generally assumed uncritically that natural science pronounces upon matters of fact whereas a philosophical theory or a metaphysic distorts them. It is also believed (*a la* Karl Popper)[29] that the hypotheses of science, since they are designed to apply to situations, other than those which suggested them, are falsifiable by such facts, or at least there are facts available to compel us to choose between rival hypotheses. But this platitude has been seriously challenged in modern times. T. S. Kuhn, in his discussion of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* has proved that the above platitude is a mistake, for he has argued that given two competing scientific paradigms, it is impossible to decide between them by appeal to *the facts* because what constitutes a *fact* is already determined by the relevant paradigm. In his words:

'The competition between paradigms is not the sort of battle that can be resolved by proofs . . .' (p. 147).[30]

[29]Popper, K., pp. 40–42.
[30]Kuhn, T. S., p. 147.

One should not, however, make too much out of this alleged attack on the assumed neutrality of facts. For there is always a group of 'ground-floor' facts that are not in dispute at all between scientists. In fact, both Kuhn and his critics would agree that all scientific activity presupposes an agreement as regards such facts. A theologian like Professor Basil Mitchell has, on the other hand, found it fruitful to draw an analogy between the problems, faced by the philosophers of science regarding disagreement and theory-choice among scientists and those faced by the philosophers of religion regarding the rationality of religious beliefs among people. Mitchell argues that although the disputes in both fields cannot be settled by appeal to strict proof or facts, nevertheless it is in principle possible to rationally prefer one side to the other (p. 75 ff).[31] I think it is not in dispute that rational choices are made or even that they are, in principle, possible. This is so because the term 'rational' is broad enough to include a lot of things, the logical, the psychological, the sociological, or even the aesthetic ('one theory is chosen over the other because of neatness and elegance'). But this point has no direct bearing upon my main problem here: the notion of fact.

As long as it is allowed that there are certain facts which are neutral to any theory or hypothesis or conceptual scheme, they can be regarded as 'brute-facts' in the sense that is needed for our purpose. For in relation to them it would be claimed that the religious propositions, such as the pain-thesis and others like it, would be non-factual. It is to be noted that not all (and some of them are also important) religious propositions are included here. For example, I have left the question of the existence of God or the possibility of creation out of nothing, or other miraculous possibilities, out of these above considerations. The attempt to see certain types of religious statements as statements of value rather than fact is in no way an attempt to undervalue them. On this let me quote Wittgenstein once again:[32]

'What it says does not add to our knowledge in any sense. But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it' . . . (p. 12)

[31] Mitchell, B., 1973, p. 75.
[32] Wittgenstein, 1965, p. 12.

If, however, it can be shown that, different religious doctrines apart, there is a correct metaphysic of man's being (= *SAT*) and a pervasive sense of meaninglessness or absurdity (T. Nagel) and anxiety indicates the depth of man's estrangement from *SAT* (alienation from himself), then the *Duḥkha* would also become factual. But that is not our purpose here.

CHAPTER THREE

Problem of Evil

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The problem of suffering leads one naturally to think of the problem of evil, although it may not directly relate itself with the theological/philosophical problem of evil. The theological/philosophical justification of evil is also called *Theodicy*, derived from the Greek *theos* and *dike* (justice). The usual belief among modern scholars is that Indians did not recognize the problem of evil. Even Arthur Herman, who has written a well-researched dissertation on Theodicy and Indian Thought, has commented that Indians are 'strangely silent' about this problem which has been almost a gadfly to the Western theologians and philosophers over the ages. This lack of concern for the problem is sometimes asserted to be a *virtue* (a *bhūṣaṇa*, not a *duṣaṇa*) of Indian religions. And it is often pointed out that a problem regarding evil does not arise because evil is unreal in Indian thought.

Critics, however, regard this lack of concern as resulting from a confusion, or failure to distinguish, between good and evil (M. Eliade, 1965, p. 96, C. Eliot, I, p. ci). And this failure is even accounted for by a reference to the pervasive view that the seeming reality is only an illusion (*māyā*). Wendy O'Flaherty, who has countered this prevailing opinion about the non-existence of the problem of evil in Indian thought (O'Flaherty, 1976), has argued, on the basis of her analysis of the mythology of theodicy, that the Hindus were no less perturbed by the problem than the Western people.

My purpose in this chapter is to treat the problem of Indian theodicy

from a philosophical point of view. This will lead me to discuss briefly some Indian concepts of *theos*, the paradox of creation and *līlā*, and implication of the doctrine of *Karma*. There has been a revival of interest in the problem of evil notably in the Western analytic tradition by certain influential writings of J. L. Mackie, A. Plantinga, B. Mitchell and A. Kenny. I have tried to connect my discussion with this contemporary perspective.

Is *duḥkha* connected with the problem of evil in any way? Here we can possibly underline a tentative contrast between the religious orientation of India and of the West. The same realities, let us grant, are called sometimes *duḥkha* by the Indian philosophers and 'evil' by their western counterparts, and hence the two terms may have in some cases the same extension, like 'the evening star' and 'the morning star' but they are not, let us say, intensionally isomorphic or synonymous. The intensional meaning of '*duḥkha*' is obviously different from that of 'evil', and such difference, for one thing, can be intuitively grasped. Evil presupposes, sometimes, a devil, an active force that might be turning things into evils. Evil calls to our mind malevolence which runs counter to the benevolence of an all-powerful God. And in this way it apparently generates what is called the problem of evil. But *duḥkha* seems to be a passive experience. Faced with malevolence, we normally react in a particular way, we are inclined to fight it or invoke power superior to us to overcome it. Faced with pain, we react too, but differently, we try to avoid it, or escape from it. We try to desensitise our mind towards pain, using analgesics. But this is not exactly an active fighting against an evil or against malevolence. It is difficult to make the distinction between the senses of the two terms, *duḥkha* and 'evil' any more explicit. But the delicate nuance contained in these two expressions can hardly be missed.

The distinction that is often made in the Western problem of evil between physical and moral evils may not be applicable to the concept of *duḥkha*, and when the concept is extended by the religious philosophers to include almost everything else in the world, the point of the distinction would be lost. What is more significant is that persistence of evil turns into the problem of evil primarily in a monotheistic religion which entertains the concept of an omnipotent and benevolent God. Otherwise, 'evil exists' does not raise by itself any philosophical problem or contradiction, save a practical problem of how to eliminate it or minimise it. The problem of evil, i.e., the

philosophical problem has been expressed by Hume in his oft-quoted lines:[1]

'Is He (God) willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then He is impotent. Is He able but not willing? Then He is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil'?

A clear articulation of the problem of evil in this manner is found in the *Brahmasūtra* 2.1.34, which I shall discuss presently. In this connection, however, the 'atheological' arguments of the Buddhists and the Jainas of India are remarkable for clarity and boldness. Nāgārjuna, for example, in his *Twelve Door Treatise* (extant in Chinese Translation), formulated the problem of evil to refute the existence of God (in Chapter X): 'If God is the maker of all things, why did He not create all happy or all unhappy? Why did He make some happy and others unhappy'? (H. Cheng's Translation). I quote from a ninth century text of *The Mahāpurāṇa* of Jinasena:[2]

'If God created the world, where was He before creation.

If you say he was transcendent then, and needed no support, where is he now'?

'If God created the world by an act of his own will, without any raw material.

Then it is just his will and nothing else—and who will believe this silly stuff?

If He is ever perfect and complete, how could the will to create have arisen in Him?

If, on the other hand, He is not perfect, He could no more create the universe than a potter could'.

'If out of love for living things, and their needs He made the world, why did He not make creation wholly blissful, free from misfortune'?

'And God commits great sin in slaying the children whom

He Himself created.

If you say that he slays only to destroy evil beings, why did he create such beings in the first place'?

Here, therefore, a clear argument has been constructed to show that the concept of God the Creator, God the Perfect and God the wholly good runs contrary to the fact of evil and suffering. In other words, these philosophers put their finger on the right place—the most perplexing and distracting problem for the theist.

[1]Hume, *Dialogues*, Part X, p. 490.

[2]Jinasena, 4, 16–31.

The problem of evil is as old as the Hebrew Bible, if not older. In the Book of Job, when God's omnipotence as well as benevolence was thought to be inconsistent with the persistence of evil, it was argued that one is not supposed to try to find out the 'deep things' of God or to try to attain to the purpose of the Almighty (Job 11: 7).[3] This came to be formulated later on as the famous principle of the incomprehensibility of God, which was supposed to resolve the problem of evil. Spinoza, who accepted neither the traditional conception of God nor the above resolution of the problem of evil, ridiculed the incomprehensibility principle as flying into the 'asylum of ignorance'.

A believer, however, would not find the incomprehensibility principle unsatisfactory for resolving the apparent contradiction between the traditional conception of God and the persistence of evil. There have been many modern sophisticated versions of the problem and its attempted resolutions. But the old defence is still sustained. As Professor Harry Wolfson puts it in the mouth of his 'hypothetical scriptural philosopher':[4]

'Does anybody know of a better solution and is not resignation out of faith better than resignation out of despair'?

3.2 LOGICAL FORMULATIONS

Alvin Plantinga formulates the problem of 'traditional theism' as follows:[5]

(a) that God exists,
(b) that God is omnipotent,
(c) that God is omniscient,
(d) that God is wholly good, and
(e) that evil exists.

J. L. Mackie points out that only three propositions would be sufficient to show the required contradiction that God is omnipotent,

[3]*The Book of Job*: [Zophar said] Wilt thou seek to fathom the inscrutable Godhead?

M. Buttenwieser writes about Job: '. . . of the masterpieces which time has handed down, of the Biblical books in special, it is the one which in every age is felt to be the most modern. The author, we are bound to believe, was a man who in his own life had sounded the depths of human suffering, and who had been awakened by his experience to a larger consideration of the problem of the universe . . .' p. 3.

[4]Wolfson, H., p. 17.

[5]Plantinga, 1967, p. 116.

that God is good and that evil exists;[6] this, however, will not generate contradiction immediately, for we need some additional premises, or 'some quasi-logical rules' connecting the terms 'good', 'evil', and 'omnipotent'. First, good is to be taken to be opposed to evil, in such a way that a good thing always eliminates evil as far as it can. Secondly, it should be entertained that there are no non-logical limits to what an omnipotent being can do. One has to say 'non-logical'; for, as St. Thomas pointed out, nobody expects God to square a circle. In this way, it would be obvious according to Mackie that if the first two of the theist's propositions are true, the third must be false. Plantinga, however, has argued that the actual formulation of the additional premises required to show the contradiction would involve eventually a proposition that would entail something like the following: 'Someone's bearing pain is never a good state of affairs'. But the last according to Plantinga is a moral judgement (I skip the elaborate formulation of Plantinga's argument) and moral judgements of this type may not be agreeable to the theist (for counter-examples are easy to imagine). Plantinga demands that the atheologian must produce a proposition that is either necessarily true, or an essential part of theism, or a consequent of such propositions. This means that the proposed contradiction in the theist's position has not been shown. Such is the thrust of Plantinga's elaborate argument.

Plantinga has also argued that the *a posteriori* argument from the problem of evil—the argument that uses an empirical premise like 'severe, protracted, involuntary human pain is a fact'—to show that theism is wrong, turns upon a disagreement between the parties (pp. 129–30). This disagreement is about whether any good state of affairs outweighs protracted and severe human pain. This will be again a non-trivial moral judgement. This seems to me to hark back to the old principle of incomprehensibility. For we reach the impasse almost at the same point. Seeing the predominance of protracted human pain, the non-believer would claim that there cannot be any good state of affairs that outweighs it, while the theist will say with a smile, 'How do you know'?

Basil Mitchell's story of a stranger working with members of the resistance group (in an occupied country during wartime) illustrates the central issue in an admirable manner.[7] The partisan who believes

[6]Mackie, J. L., 'Evil and Omnipotence', in the *Problem of Evil*, ed. by Adams & Adams, Oxford 1990.

[7]Mitchell, B., 1973, pp. 18–20.

the stranger to be on the side of the resistance, would not give up easily in the face of many contrary evidence but if he is sane and reasonable in his belief, he will experience in himself the full force of the conflict. In Mitchell's view the theologian, unlike his counterpart in Plantinga's picture, would not smilingly ask 'How do you know'? but rather 'recognise the fact of pain as counting against the Christian doctrine; he will experience in himself the full force of the conflict but can still maintain his faith'. For, of course, the non-believer can ask Plantinga's theologian a counter question. 'At the personal level, if I do not know and will never know what a good state of affairs may present protracted, involuntary, severe pain is or entails, I can do without such good'.

There are several other ways by which the controversy over the problem of evil has rolled on over the ages. We have the instrumentalist view of evil which holds, as Plantinga already did as part of his argument, that evil is a means to good. In the present century (with the formulation of the scientific notion of 'evolution') we have another version from F. R. Tennant, which combines the evolutionary view of the universe with instrumentalism:[8] evils are inevitable for the evolution of 'the best possible world'. Another way has been to use the notion of free will to resolve the problem. This has been much discussed in recent times, and finally we have J. L. Mackie's formulation of the paradox of omnipotence to refute the Free-will defence of evil.

3.3 SUFFERING VIEWED AS EVIL AND A PROBLEM: THE INDIAN PROBLEM

My purpose here is to discuss the problem of *duḥkha* viewed as equivalent to the problem of evil. In fact the problem of *duḥkha* is not generally presented as a problem in the Indian religions in the way the problem of evil is presented as a problem in the West. *Duḥkha* is admitted as a fact that is given to us, and the problem is one of what to do about it, *a practical one*. It is not always seen as a theoretical or philosophical problem that needs conceptual explanation and argument to avoid or resolve alleged inconsistencies. I say here 'not always' deliberately to indicate that sometimes it has been seen as a problem in the same manner and discussed briefly, giving some succinct arguments which I shall discuss briefly here. But the main

[8]Tennant, F. R. (in W. Alston), pp. 68–86.

reason for not seeing it as a puzzling and a pressing problem was, perhaps, the fact that early Indian philosophers (a term which, as I use it, is inclusive of the *śramaṇa* and the *brāhmaṇa* schools), did not always put forward the idea of an omnipotent and benevolent creator God as the central part of their faith or as an effective explanation of the origin of the universe. The Buddha and Jaina arguments that I have quoted earlier presupposed a popular conception of a creator God to be found in the *Purāṇas*, etc. But hardly a philosophical text discusses the issue seriously.

Let us now turn to the Indian problem of evil in relation to Indian monotheism. Some forms of Indian religious thinking could be called monotheistic inasmuch as they conceive of a transcendental personal being who is also called 'creator'. But one word of caution. It is almost impossible to find a serious philosophic endorsement of the notion of a creation out of nothing by a transcendent omnipotent being. And this, as it will appear, is a very significant difference.

In the Vaiśesika theism, God is said to be the creator, in the sense of being an efficient cause after *the model of a potter* creating a pot out of pre-existent clay.[9] What is significant is that the world is said to be eternal in the sense that the constituents of matter, the atoms, are indestructible and eternal and there is only periodic dissolution and creation with the intervention of Providence (cf. *ṣamjihīrsā* and *sisṛkṣā* in Praśastapāda). Human souls are also eternal and uncreated and they enjoy and suffer, depending on whether they act rightly or wrongly. God is supposed to be the distributor of justice, reward and punishment, and He creates the world accordingly. Creation means here the occasional bringing together of the material, indestructible atoms to form the gross matter (which actually was dissolved in the first place into their atomic constituents). Distribution of reward and punishment amounts to letting the souls enjoy and suffer in this world (and not in some hell or heaven), according to their acquired destiny of *Karma*.

In early Vedānta, the attributeless Brahman can hardly be the creator God; it is the qualified Brahman or Īsvara, who can be called the Lord as well as the creator. But sūtra 2.1.32 raises an objection: Why should God create at all in the first place since he does not have

[9]This is the clear implication of the usual Vaiśeṣika argument: *Kṣitiḥ sakartṛkā Kāryatvāt ghaṭavat.*

any need or want?[10] The answer is given in the next sūtra, saying that His creation is only a game or sport, a way to amuse Himself. Just as sport is a motiveless activity of a person who is already happy and fully satisfied, Creation is an over-flowing from the fullness of the joy of God. But the next sūtra (2.1.34) raises a more interesting point. God by creating this world has created inequalities (*vaiṣamya*) and must also be guilty of cruelty for creating so much evil and suffering. The answer is given as follows: God creates depending upon the pre-existent destiny of man in the form of their potential Karmic residues. God is the general cause of creation in the way rainfall (cf. *parjanya*) is the general cause of the production of plants, trees and vegetation. Variations in creation are due to the varieties of other factors which are variable. Neither Vaiśeṣika nor Vedānta think that God's alleged omnipotence is incompatible with His dependence upon other factors in creation. It is probably allowed that He could have done otherwise and chose not to. Or, it may be argued that omnipotence is compatible with acting according to a rule or law. God in his creation abides by the law of *Karma* and *avidyā*. This amounts to [if we do not feel comfortable with the law of *Karma* and *avidyā*] saying that God's omnipotence is bound by ethico-causal and logical laws. Therefore, contrary to the general belief that the solution of the problem of evil, according to Vedānta, lies in its assertion that evil (and the world) is an illusion, it is clear from the above that both Vedānta and Vaiśeṣika are prepared to accept that God's omnipotence is limited or even that God does not actually create this world and human souls, out of nothing.

Logically, the solution suggested here seems to be beyond censure. Let us recall, for example, J. L. Mackie's criticism of theism on the basis of the problem of evil. The problem as Mackie sees it is a logical one—that of clarifying and reconciling a number of beliefs. It becomes a problem only for those who believe 'that there is a God who is both omnipotent and wholly good'.[11] But an adequate solution would be possible not simply by denying God's omnipotence but also by making his creation conditional upon another independent principle. One may retain the belief that God is wholly good but not (probably) omnipotent in the sense of being capable of creating

[10] *Vedāntasūtra*, 2.1.32. See Śaṃkara.

[11] Mackie, op. cit.

everything out of nothing. Human souls are not created, nor is their freedom as agents bestowed upon them by God. If, as most Indian philosophers argued, God is not made responsible for these two facts, then the problem of evil is logically resolved although at the expense of seriously curbing His power or omnipotence.

At this stage, however, an Indian theistic philosopher faces a two-pronged attack. One from the non-theist Indian philosophers, the Buddhists and the Jainas, and the other from, let us say, the theist philosophers of the Western variety. The non-theist asks, 'Since you almost trivialise the role of God in creation, and seriously encumber His omnipotence, do you still need Him to give an account of the universe'? In other words, if the law of *Karma* and moral order is an absolute principle and on par with the natural order and this is deemed independent of God, God's role reduces to the administration of justice and allows men to enjoy and suffer according to their pre-destined *Karma*. The non-theist argues that one can then go a step further to make the moral order operative automatically and independently in the distribution of justice. The western theist, on the other hand, says that if God's power to create everything out of nothing is taken away, then it takes 'Godness' away from God, and the so-called theistic position of the above India philosophers is in fact a camouflaged atheism.

In reply, the Indian theist-philosopher argues that he is not trying to define God out of existence but only making His existence compatible with the fact of evil. It is asserted that God is independent of the universe, but still not unrelated to it, His role being that of creator and preserver. There is hardly any agreement, even among the theists in the West, regarding the manner in which God created the world—whether it was in the way a potter makes a pot out of clay, or in the way a magician produces a rabbit out of nothing or an empty hat. The scriptural philosophers would insist that God created the world out of nothing (the magician-model) and implanted in it certain laws of nature by which it is governed. A counterpart of this theory, i.e. creation out-of-nothing, is also found in the Indian tradition, in the *Manusamhita*,[12] Chapter 1, and somewhat ambiguously in the Rg-Veda, Nāsadāya Hymn. But most theist philosophers of India, for reasons of their own, preferred the potter-model, and argued that God created the world out of the pre-existent matter.

[12] *Manusamhitā*, Chapter 1, verse 5 'Āsīdidam tamobhūtam etc.

3.4 GOD: THREE MODELS

No matter whether we accept a magician-model or a potter-model, both models seem to agree about the possibility of a transcendent creator. Even the traditional scriptural philosophers in the Judeo-Christian tradition were not unanimous about the magician-model (as Harry Wolfson has pointed out in his *Religious Philosophy*). But nevertheless, the idea of a transcendent creator ran into special problems about the limits of God's omnipotence, His infinitude and independence, both in India and in the West. Of several paradoxes that such a conception of God generates, one that is not directly related to the problem of evil is: if God creates something (Nature) distinguishable from Himself, the creation (Nature) seems to limit His infinitude and perfection. For, according to Christian and Jewish philosophers, God has implanted in his created world certain laws for His governance of the world, and this also makes his position equivalent to a constitutional monarch but even this constitution he seems to have either inherited or consented to abide by.[13]

Another paradox with this notion of a transcendent creator is that creation being a motivated act would imply some motive or wish-fulfillment on the part of the agent. Why did He will to create? To discern His divine plan is said to be the hardest thing and very few satisfactory answers are forthcoming from the theologians. The usual appeal is to the incomprehensibility thesis. Vedānta talks about an analogy with play or *līlā*, in the Indian context. This is a metaphor, but the point of a metaphor cannot easily be transculturally transmitted. Imagine a sovereign monarch who has no unfulfilled desire, no want, and no motive. This does not mean that he sits there completely inert and inactive. He indulges in games etc. but not because he wants some amusement, for that would imply a prior boredom which he wishes to avoid. He is not bored with himself. He might be indulging into games and other activities out of the fullness of his heart, out of the completeness of his joy. Motiveless participation in activity is conceivable. Appayya Dīkṣita comments that a happy person smiles or hums a tune although he does not need to smile for he is already happy.[14] It is unusual to ask for a motive or design or a purpose of His own behind God's creation. It

[13]Zaehner, R. C., 1970 p. 198.

[14]See his comments on Śamkara, p. 481, under *Brahmasutra* 2.1.33.

is His nature to create the world and to feel compassionate for the suffering humanity. He creates so that human souls get a chance to act and improve their lot, a chance to be happy and make the world a better place. This is the concept of *līlā*—a purposeless pastime issuing forth from the agent's own nature—an activity that is harmless and creates opportunity for others to enjoy. This *līlā* is neither the competitive games of the Olympics nor 'the jokes' of the entertainment world.

Lest the game-analogy be misunderstood, Śaṁkara gives another analogy. He says that some of our activities are *natural* to us, such as breathing in and out; there is no conscious purpose or motive behind. It is thus the *nature* of God to create out of his fullness and completeness. The *Māṇḍukya kārikā* says:[15]

'Some say, the creation is for enjoyment, others contend, it is for play. It is but the *nature* of the Lord, for how can He who is fully satisfied have desire'?

3.5 THE SPIDER-MODEL

Finding the concept of a transcendent creator paradoxical in many ways, some theologian-philosophers opt out for what is called emanationism, according to which God *caused* the world to emanate out of His own essence. As opposed to the potter-model or the magician-model, emanationism or the doctrine of immanent causality can be described as offering a *spider-model*: God caused everything to emanate out of His own essence after the manner of a spider which spins its web out of itself. The analogy occurs probably first in the Upaniṣads, but adherents of the doctrine of emanation are many, among them the Vedāntists, Neo-platonists and Spinoza. Strictly speaking, both Spinoza's notion of God and the Vedānta notion of God should be distinguished from ordinary emanationism. But my point here is that the spider-model seems to catch the point they all agree in, for it avoids most of the logical perplexities associated with a transcendent creator, a personal God who by an act of will created the universe. For example, both Spinoza and his Vedantic counterpart will agree that the world as well as the order (*cf. ṛta*) which we observe in it, is fixed and inexorable; it is beginningless (*anādi*), i.e, it has so existed from eternity.

[15]Gauḍapāda, 1.9., p. 4.

This third conception of God seems to resolve many old logical problems (including the problem of evil) connected with the notion of a creator God. But since rational or logical explanation satisfies only our *heads* and not always our *hearts*, and is seldom compatible with our religious feelings or aspirations, this conception has not always been applauded by religious people or theologians. Sometimes this conception has been branded as atheism in disguise. And it is well known that Spinoza was excommunicated for his own scepticism about orthodox theism. But Spinoza's criticism should not be confused with the Epicurean godlessness which explained the universe as originating out of the accidental collision of aimlessly drifting eternal atoms (Wolfson).[16] Spinoza was a rationalist, not an atheist. As Stuart Hampshire noted, the label of atheist earned by Spinoza was 'so superficially absurd'.[17]

Our spider-model is probably another example of the failure of inter-cultural transmission of metaphors. David Hume, after ascribing the model to the *Brāhmaṇas* (Hindus), comments that it 'appears' ridiculous to Westerners, for 'a spider is a little contemptible animal'. After expressing his dissatisfaction, Hume, however, goes on to comment afterwards: 'But still here is a new spécies of analogy, even in our globe' (*Dialogues*).[18]

This modified concept of omnipotence, which our Indian theists were not unprepared apparently to curtail and curb, need not be taken to be too unfamiliar or strange. For evidently, both Maimonides and St. Thomas argued that god has no power over (logical) impossibilities. For example, it is contended that god cannot square a circle or produce a square whose diagonals are equal to its sides or make the past not to have been (Wolfson).[19] The Indian theists would go a step further to claim that His creation and supervision of the world are for the benefit of souls and He follows the natural order as well as the moral order called the law of *Karma*. This apparent dependence upon something else besides Him does not, in their eyes, detract from or depreciate His power or 'omnipotence', for, it is argued, He has the power or ability to do it, or not to do it or to do it otherwise (cf. *kartum akartum anyathākartuṃ ca śaknoti*). If He abides by logical laws, why should not He abide by moral and natural laws? The problem of

[16]Wolfson, H. A., p. 255.
[17]Hampshire, S., p. 53.
[18]Hume, *Dialogues*, Part VII, p. 476.
[19]Wolfson, p. 18.

evil, in this way, is easily explained, first with reference to the law of *Karma* and *avidyā* which are both beginningless, i.e, existing from eternity, and second, by making it consistent with the rather modified notion of omnipotent. If, however, the law of *Karma* appears to be baffling and inscrutable to us, mortals, who would want satisfactory and finite explanation, it may be pointed out that inscrutability of the Providential decree seems to be no less baffling than that of *Karma*. In my opinion, they are alternative hypotheses, each of which is plausible.

I have discussed the alternative attempts at the solution of the paradoxicality, i.e, the incompatibility of the fact of evil and suffering with our religious belief in God's omnipotence and benevolence. But I do not claim one solution to be better than others. For it becomes a matter of the personal preference of the religious people whether to regard one as more credible than the others.

3.6 RECENT DISCUSSIONS

Recent discussions of the problem of evil have notably been influenced by J. L. Mackie's challenging paper on *Evil and Omnipotence*.[20] 'Can an omnipotent being make things which he cannot control'? This seems to be as paradoxical as asking 'can there be a barber who shaves all and only those who do not shave themselves'? Some theistic philosophers now argue that it is proper to give up the notion of omnipotence in the traditional sense and accept instead the notion of being almighty, i.e., the sense of having power over all things (Geach 1973, *'Omnipotence'* and Kenny in the *God of the Philosophers*).[21] Kenny thinks that divine omnipotence, if it is to be a coherent notion, must be a 'narrower' one 'consisting in the possession of all logically possible powers which it is logically possible for a being with the attributes of God to possess' (p. 98). This narrower conception of divine omnipotence is however formulated within a framework of Judeo-Christian theology and hence made apparently compatible with the creation of the universe out of nothing by a transcendent creator. One may even go further and talk about the even narrower conception of divine omnipotence as found in the Indian religious tradition where creation is out of the pre-existent matter according to the pre-existent

[20]Mackie, J. L., 'Evil and omnipotence', op. cit.
[21]Kenny, A., pp. 94–96, Geach, P. T., 1973, p. 7.

law of nature and morality (*Karma*) by the agency of a benevolent almighty deity. I have illustrated varieties of theism or theistic beliefs. At the other end of the scale we find another variety of theism (let us call it theism, for that is how it is explained and understood) where the role of the benevolent deity is reduced to a minimum. This is the God of the *Yogasūtra*, where God is only the final goal of our religious life and spiritual aspirations.[22] He is described here as one realised by such persons as seek after Him; as for the rest of the universe and our action with regard to it, He is said to be indifferent and unresponsive. God is even called here a perfect soul that is entirely unaffected by actions and troubles that affect souls like ours. Can he help us? Yes, only if we are trying to attain a similar perfection. Is God a soul or a person which has perfected himself? I do not know the answer from the Yoga system. But if the answer is yes, then we are not very far away from such non-theistic religions as Buddhism and Jainism. For the position of the Buddha or Mahāvīra is not very different from this type of God, a being who perfected himself. By a curious and perhaps twisted argument we have completed a circle; we seem now to have rounded up our non-theistic religions, Buddhism and Jainism, into the fold of what may be called even 'theism'.[23]

Recent discussion of the problem of evil and God seems to have many resonances of the past. I am tempted here to underline certain resonances particularly with reference to the classical Indian philosophical writings. The point of this exercise in parallelism is nothing more than to show probably that Nietzsche's doctrine of the 'eternal recurrence' might have been right in at least one particular area (unsuspected by Nietzsche himself): the area of philosophical theology.

The Freewill Theodicy of St. Augustine (Book VII, See of the Confessions) has been challenged by Mackie by showing that it is logically inconsistent. Mackie's claim is roughly that God, if He were omnipotent, could have created a world with *free* creatures who would always choose the good. Plantinga in his 1974 version of the Freewill Theodicy (*God, Freedom and Evil*, Harper Torchbook) argues that even

[22]Patañjali, *Yogasūtra*, Chapter 1, Sūtra 24.

[23]It is, of course, not being claimed here that Buddhism and Jainism are 'theistic' in the way theism is understood ordinarily. But it seems undeniable that both the Buddha in Buddhism (at least in Mahāyāna) and the Mahāvīra in Jainism do enjoy a special status of a perfect being, a being who has perfected himself and, what is more, can and does help others to follow the same path of perfection.

if God is omnipotent and omniscient, it is still not within his power to create just any possible world. And as long as God's properties do not logically entail that any free creature created by him does always what is right, it is possible that God with all his properties in fact creates free creatures who sometimes do wrong. Freedom of the creature implies that he can choose between alternative courses of action. This implicitly states that the actual world is not simply created by God alone but is in a genuinely joint production of God and the *free* creatures He actualises. Eric Erikson[24] once related a story about a Boston clergyman who congratulated a gardener saying 'What a beautiful garden you and God have created jointly'! The gardener, however, said in reply 'Yes, but you should have seen how it was when it was left to God alone'.

Contrary to the belief of most Indologists, the Freewill Theodicy is not an unknown concept in the Indian tradition. Sri Ramakrishna, the well-known Indian mystic of the nineteenth century, used to say 'Man's freedom is responsible for many evils in the world'. Free agents sometimes change their minds, act out of character. The upholders of Freewill Theodicy therefore point out that each creaturely essence suffers from what Plantinga calls a 'transworld depravity' such that no matter which circumstances God might provide as a context for action, a *free* creature would perform at least one morally wrong action. The thrust of the argument is that God in spite of his omnipotence cannot create a *perfect* world with free creatures who can do no wrong.

It is possible that a free creature would perform at least one morally wrong action. But must he perform at least one morally wrong action? I think not. For it is also possible that he would not perform any morally wrong action. It is certainly not logically impossible for free persons to contingently choose always what is right. It would be also irreligious to claim that a creature if free must perform at least one morally wrong action. Plantinga's Theodicy appeals to the proposition that God *cannot* create free agents and then not let them exercise it and also with his omnipotence and omniscience take steps to prevent wrongdoing. Just as from the concept freedom, it does not necessarily follow that a free creature would act at least once in a morally wrong way, it does not also necessarily follow that he would not act rightly always.

Plantinga in *God and other Minds* (p. 132) propounds a view that

[24]This story was related by Erik Erikson in his introductory comments of *Youth and Identity Crisis*.

is also not uncommon in ordinary discussion of Theism: God with His foreknowledge sees that in the world He is about to create with free agents good would outweigh evil and with this assurance He sets himself to the task of creation. This tries to meet such criticism as that God took a big chance in creating a world with free agents for there was no assurance of the net results being good. Since God is good, the criticism continues, He should not gamble; why then did He create? The Plantinga type of answer to this criticism presupposes (a) that God in spite of His omniscience and omnipotence is limited as regards His ability to secure always right action by His creatures or to secure non-action of wrong and (b) that He therefore settles for a favourable balance. Since we have argued above that it is possible for free creatures to choose always to do what is right, it is also presupposed here that God is limited in His power to actualise (create) this possibility. If this argument has been so far right, then we are getting 'awfully' close to the Indian variety of Theodicy of freewill. The 'free creature' possibilities (creatures who may not do anything wrong) are not *created* by God. In fact one has to admit that such possibilities do not exist or if they exist, they are very very rare. What is more important is that God does not *create* possibilities of free creatures, or such creaturely essences (= souls?), at all. He simply lets such pre-existent possibilities be actualised with, as it were, a divine nod (as Praśastapāda claims in his description of creation by Maheśvara). And each creaturely essence is affected by a two-fold depravity, not exactly a 'transworld depravity' as Plantinga would like to call it, but an ingrained misconception as regards what is good (compare the Indian notion of 'beginningless *avidyā*') and an ingrained freedom or tendency to act freely under such misconception (compare the Indian notion of *Karma* which is also said to be 'beginningless').

Such implications of Freewill Theodicy need not be considered too farfetched. Nelson Pike, for example, has drawn some similar conclusions from his criticism of Plantinga's argument.[25] Pike has illustrated his argument with a new parable of Edam and the mouse-set. In his Edam story, he deliberately makes God not responsible for the creation of the mouse-set (i.e. person-set), God *found* it, nor is He responsible for making the mouse choose to run a course (readers are invited to read the parable and see how the above implications would be drawn).

[25]Pike, N., pp. 449–73.

Kenny, while pointing out unmistakable similarity of Plantinga's position with the Freewill Defence of Molinism (due to Luis de Molina) of the sixteenth century, has argued convincingly that this version of the Freewill Defence is incoherent, for no coherent account seems possible of His foreknowledge and indeterminism (pp. 51–71). Kenny, also examining the compatibility of determinism and foreknowledge, concludes:[26]

'If God is to have infallible knowledge of future human actions, then determinism must be true. If God is to escape responsibility for human wickedness, then determinism must be false. Hence in the notion of a God who foresees all sins but is the author of none, there lurks a contradiction'.

John Stuart Mill argued for the notion of a deity that natural theology would lead up to: 'a being of great but limited power . . . of great and perhaps unlimited intelligence, . . . who desires, and pays some regard to, the happiness of his creatures, but who seems to have other motives of action which he cares more for, and who can hardly be supposed to have created the universe for that purpose alone'. (*Theism*, 1887, p. 194). Kenny quotes this passage of Mill with approval and comments that certainly none of his own arguments would rule out the existence of such a deity. He also says that such a deity of natural religion differs no more than the deity of the philosophers does from the god of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Kenny then goes on to deal with another interesting problem: that of conceivability of a disembodied intelligence whose sphere of operation is the whole universe. Kenny's discussion of the notion of a disembodied mind is reminiscent of a similar discussion by Udayana in his most celebrated work on rational theology in Indian tradition, *Nyāyakusumāñjali*.[27]

The list of divine attributes that Mill submits as admissible in natural theology is very significant from the point of view of the Indian theologians. I have already pointed out the limitations that Naiyāyikas would admit to God's power and knowledge. Udayana explicitly argues for a deity whose power and knowledge must be immeasurably superior to those of human beings (*asmadādīnām asambhavāt*, etc.). The purpose of creation is again said to be either compassion (cf. Praśastapāda) for the beings or *līlā* (divine, disinterested play out of

[26]Kenny, A., p. 121.

[27]Udayana, *Nyāyakusumāñjali*, Chapter V. See *Vṛtti* under Verse 2, pp. 486 ff.

the fullness of joys—as in *Brahmasūtra*) or both. This is not very far from Mill's characterisation: 'Who desires, and pays some regard to, the happiness of his creatures, but who seems to have other motives of action which he cares more for, and who can hardly be supposed to have created the universe for that purpose alone'.

Kenny has pointed out that 'traditionally faith was faith in God as saviour, not as creator' (p. 127). If I extend this comment to mean that faith in creator-God is dispensable then some of the notions of God envisioned by the Indian religions will not be entirely outlandish, for each of these religions can be seen as a soteriological system with a common assumption about the 'problems of life' from which salvation, freedom, is sought after; allowing, of course, a variety of interpretations of the final goal that is being sought after.

CHAPTER FOUR

Scepticism

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Some discussion of scepticism forms an integral part of any philosophy of religion. As A. Kenny has noted (*in The God of the Philosophers 1979*):

'The demonstration that the very notion of God is incoherent is itself a successful piece of natural theologizing'. (p. 4).

The problem of evil, as we have seen, raises serious sceptical doubts about the coherence of theism. But this religious scepticism can also be seen as part of a more general form of scepticism, philosophical scepticism, which deals with the anomaly of asserting any belief, and the universal possibility of illusion regarding the existence of anything. In this chapter I shall deal with the Indian version of this philosophical scepticism. It will be noted how the negative dialectic was used to derive sceptical conclusions, or rather to maintain the 'non-assertive' stance of the pure sceptic. A special notion of refutation/negation is developed in support of this stance. It is also shown here how this sceptical trend was in accord with not only the position of the materialists or agnostics, who reject everything except matter, but also, and curiously enough, the position of the mystics who underline the limitation of logic and hope for direct illumination about the truth. Scepticism, in this way, was in line with the religious mysticism of India.

A philosophical sceptic is not an iconoclast or an aggressor into the Temple of Truth, but because of his extreme concern for truth—a concern which may be sometimes out of proportion—he is reluctant

to accept anything less. He persists in seeking and probing, and hence takes the position of a critic vis-a-vis a philosopher. A philosopher, let us imagine, is one who tries to expound or defend a view about the world, or the way the world is or appears to be. Philosophers are usually not sceptics, although scepticism forms undoubtedly an important part of philosophic activity in almost all ages everywhere. Indeed, philosophy today is more commonly understood as a kind of activity, and sceptical questions and doubts supply the vital moving force of such activity.

It is difficult to define scepticism. But some broad characterisations are possible. If the word 'sceptic' simply meant, as it has sometimes been claimed (e.g. by R. G. Bury), an 'inquirer' or 'investigator', then many, if not all, philosophers would have fallen into this category.[1] But obviously the word is used in a more specific sense. A critical philosophical attitude, if it is consistently maintained throughout, may be called scepticism. But the word certainly has acquired a negative connotation. A sceptic cannot accept validity of any knowledge-claim, any truth or probability-claim. The spirit of scepticism can be carried on to the fields of morality, religion and politics. And in such cases, the concern of the sceptic is not so much with truth as with the justification or rightness of certain principles, concepts or ideas. Scepticism seems to have aligned itself with pessimism as well as 'passivism'. It is difficult, though not impossible, for a sceptic, in the sense I am concerned with here, to be also an optimist or a political activist or a revolutionary. On the positive side, however, a sceptic may be characterized as a seeker of truth, if anything, as a conformist in practice with the prevailing social and political norms. A sceptic can also be, as I shall argue, mystically inclined as well as be a dialectician or a 'sophist' in a non-pejorative sense. He may be like a well-armed man, always on guard and ready for fight, but never provoking any. Or, he may be a man who renounces contention, for 'philosophic problems', for him, '*completely* disappear' *a la* Wittgenstein.[2]

Who among philosophers deserves to be called a sceptic or be said to hold a sceptical position? In the Indian context, we can mention Sañjaya and a few other *śramaṇa*s, who were contemporaries of the Buddha. In the history of Western thought, *Sextus Empiricus*

[1]Bury, p. xxix.

[2]Wittgenstein, P. I, I, *para* 133, p. 51e.

(*c.* AD 200) is often regarded as the most well-known of those who call themselves sceptics. I shall try to give an outline of Sañjaya's thought and discuss the nature, aim and method of the Indian sceptical tradition which, in my opinion, set the background for the development of Indian philosophic thought. In developing the position of Indian scepticism, I shall draw mainly from the writings of three different philosophers, Nāgārjuna (*c.* AD 150), Jayarāśi (*c.* AD 800) and Śrīharṣa (*c.* AD 1100). These three philosophers come from three different philosophic traditions of India. The first represented the Mādhyamika Buddhists, the second was either a crude materialist or an agnostic, and the third was an Advaita Vedantin (a mystic). But in spite of this difference, there was an affinity in their styles of philosophizing, an agreement that was noted and even defended by the last-named philosopher, Śrīharṣa.[3] This style is what I shall call scepticism in Indian philosophy and once we have understood the peculiar nature of this scepticism, its difference from (and agreement, if any, with) other forms of philosophic scepticism found in the West, will be clear.

A philosophic position is hardly considered as established or vindicated unless it has answered its critics and responded to the objections of its opponents. In the Indian tradition, the opponents' criticism and objections are usually grouped under the rubric *pūrvapakṣa*. To build up a *pūrvapakṣa* has been the general practice, sometimes followed too meticulously, in almost all systematic philosophic writings of India since the first century AD. It has also been argued that if the *pūrvapakṣa* is not properly understood, the philosopher's own position will hardly make any sense. The opponent usually holds a different view, disagreeing with the philosopher, and records his disagreements giving some reason or counter-argument. But sometimes the opponent may *simply* disagree and refute the proposition of the philosopher without holding any particular doctrine of his own. And if he succeeds in doing so (and this is an important 'if', as we will see presently) he can be called a sceptic in our sense. Instead of playing the role of an opponent, a sceptic-philosopher may himself put all the other philosophers in the opposite camp and then indulge in the art of refutation. Refutation of a philosophic position *usually* implies acceptance of its negation i.e., a counter-position. But a sceptic cannot maintain his scepticism by assenting to a counter-

[3]Śriharṣa, *Khaṇḍanakhaṇḍakhādya*, pp. 3–4. See Granoff, pp. 72–73.

position. Hence he has a duty to disagree with both a position and its counter-position, assigning reason in both cases. In other words, he suspends judgement in favour of either. It is, however, not easy to maintain such a position, for a sceptic has to be well conversant with the art of philosophic debate. Scepticism can be sustained only by one who is also a master debater, a dialectician. He has to employ skilfully his *pro*-arguments as well as *contra*-argument so that his sceptical position, if it is a position at all, would remain uncompromised. For any *pro*-argument for a proposition or a doctrine, he has to find an equally strong *contra*-argument so that the tug-of-war of pro's and con's comes to a standstill and balances one another. It is, therefore, obvious that such scepticism can hardly flourish in a *milieu* where the art as well as the theory of disputation or dialectic has not reached a well-developed form.

4.2 SAÑJAYA

Professor H. Ui describes Sañjaya's philosophy as a scepticism on the one had and a primitive step towards the criticism of knowledge on the other (*Vaiśeṣika Philosophy*).[4] This assessment of Sañjaya seems to me to be fairly correct. Sañjaya was a philosophical sceptic and there were many others at the time of the Buddha and the Mahāvīra. This tradition must have been the precursor of the later-day scepticism as reflected in the writings of Nāgārjuna, Jayarāśi and Śrīharṣa. Sañjaya was sceptical about certain knowledge claims, viz. about the certainty claimed by other *śramaṇas* and *brāhmaṇas* (who for the Western audience were described by the Greeks as 'gymnosophists') regarding moral and metaphysical matters. Typical questions asked in those days were: 'What is right and what is wrong'? 'Is there an afterlife'? and 'Is there a soul'? And generally the sceptics argued that it is impossible to know correct answers to such questions.[5]

It is clear that these early Indian sceptics attached higher value to moral development and final salvation. In spite of their scepticism, they apparently believed or maintained that it is usually wrong or reprehensible to make false claims, whether knowingly or unknowingly. The Jaina canonical literature, as H. Jacobi pointed out, argued that these sceptics believed that not knowledge but *tapas* was

[4]Ui, H., p. 23.
[5]See *Dīgha Nikāya*, I, 27.

necessary for salvation of final beatitude.[6] In this respect, therefore, they differed from the Greek sophists and resembled the kind of sceptic described by Sextus, who resorted to their *epoché* (suspension of judgement) to gain the state of unperturbedness or ataraxia. Sextus says:[7]

'the man who determines nothing as to what is naturally good or bad neither shuns nor pursues anything eagerly; and, in consequence, he is unperturbed'.

In the Indian context, however, these sceptic recluses were committed to the ascetic way of life and practised austerities (*tapas*) to achieve quietude.

The early Indian sceptics were somewhere in the midway between the Greek sophists and the Greek sceptics. The early canonical literature of Buddhism and Jainism bears witness to the fact that these sceptics were astute debaters. Oldenberg put the point nicely in his outstanding book on *The Buddha* (London, Tr. W. Holms, 1882):

'Certain phenomena which developed themselves in the busy bustle of the ascetic and philosophizing circles, may be described as a species of Indian *sophistic*; wherever a Socrates appears, sophists cannot fail to follow. The condition under which these sophistic arose were quite similar to those which gave birth to their Greek counterpart . . . there followed Gorgiases, and Protagorases and a whole host of ingenious species, somewhat frivolous virtuosi, dealers in dialectic and rhetoric'.[8]

We may discount, to some extent, the enthusiasm of Oldenberg for the comparison of East and West, and dispute whether the sophists followed Socrates or it was the other way around. It may also be noted that the Socratic elenchus or dialectic was, at least in Plato's version, an improved and philosophically respectable form of argument developed from the art of disputation of the Sophists. But the general point of Oldenberg's comparison can still be sustained, as the later history of the art of philosophic disputation in India shows.

[6]Jacobi, H., *Jaina Sūtras*, Part II, pp. 83–84.

[7]Sextus, I, 28. Sextus compares the sceptic with Apelles, Court painter of Alexander the Great. Once Apelles was painting a horse, and wanted to paint the horse's foam. Being unsuccessful several times, he flung, in despair, a wiping sponge at the picture. Lo and behold the foam was automatically painted by the marks of the sponge. Sceptics get their *ataraxia* in this way suddenly. Compare it with the *sudden illumination theory* of the Indian mystics.

[8]Oldenburg, 1882 edn., p. 68.

The Indian sophists, unlike their Greek counterparts, did not go to the extent of teaching the art of debate and rhetoric to the rich young men in exchange of money. Nor did they 'meddle' into politics or public affairs of the government. Their concern was more spiritual, moral and religious. It is also arguable whether they were inclined to win a debate at any cost and resorted to what Sextus has called 'the trickster of reason'. But it was an age when participation in philosophic or religious debates was almost unavoidable. This must have been the reason for Sañjaya to develop a technique of argumentation in order to avoid not only defeat but also assertion of any negative proposition. A sceptic, as I have already noted, must remain well-armed with an arsenal of arguments, that would be designed to allow him to refuse either to affirm or to deny anything. Therefore it is not unnatural that Sañjaya would adopt an attitude of 'non-assertion' with the help of what is called the five-fold negation of a position: (1) 'Not so', (2) 'Not thus', (3) 'Not otherwise', (4) 'Not not so', (5) 'Not *no* to not so'. The upshot of this rather clumsy negation and double negation was, as I said, nothing but to keep their attitude of 'non-assertion' unharmed or unperturbed. If Sañjaya started this use of double-edged negation, Nāgārjuna perfected it with his tetralemmas, dilemmas, reductios, (*prasaṅga*).

4.3 NĀGĀRJUNA

Nāgārjuna took the position of a critic against the *pramāṇa* theory, by which is meant a philosophical position that roughly claims that we can discover and describe the way the world is with the help of our accredited means of knowing, i.e., *pramāṇas*. I shall briefly develop the theme which engaged Nāgārjuna (in his *Vv.*) with the help of an imagined dialogue between a critic and a philosopher.[9]

If we claim that we can discover and describe the way the world is, or the way we believe that the world is, with the help of our means of knowing, we have to have these means at our disposal, i.e., available to us. Not only that. We have to *know* or recognize that those are the means that we have. Otherwise we might have money in the pocket but if we are unaware of it, we cannot use it for any purposes. To make the means available to us we have to make them effective. A means is not a means unless it does something. To make it effective, then

[9]The argument presented is a simplified version of Nāgārjuna's point made in *Vigrahavyāvartanī*.

we have to know that it is available. The critic at this stage points out that if you allow this much, then the means of knowing are themselves turned into 'objects' of knowing. A *pramāṇa* is turned into a *prameya*. A means is transformed into an end, and to achieve that end we need further means. This argument is called in Sanskrit *pramānatvāsiddhi*.

Our philosopher may argue that there is no fatal fault that is conceded here, for we do need to prepare the tools before we can make a table with them. But the critic sees here an opening that, he thinks, will lead us eventually to *regressus ad infinitum*. For certainly, our philosopher is not going to say, when his means turns into an end needing another means, that the end is its own means, or contrarily, the means is its own end. If he does say so, we can examine his position separately (for which see below). But, if, as he says, the means to establish the means of knowing does stand itself in need of being established, then we are bound to regress to infinity. In Indian dialectics, this is called the fault of *anavasthā* (in Sanskrit), which in effect amounts to an infinite regress. In other words, it means we are on a slippery ground, slipping ever backwards without stopping. One is reminded of the well-known 'dog-flea' verse:

Each dog has on its back a little flea to bite him,
And on that flea another flea and so ad infinitum.

There is an old village parable about a witch-doctor in Bengal, who was a successful exorcist because he used to exorcise any person or thing possessed of the evil spirit with the help of a few handfuls of mustard seeds. Now the evil spirit, in order to baffle the exorcism, one day entered into those seeds themselves. If the means of knowing are turned into 'objects' of knowing, I think, a similar situation arises with our philosopher who wanted to establish 'objects' through 'means'. As Russell has said about such a paradox:

'. . . the process is like trying to jump on the shadow of your head'. (*My Philosophical Development*, p. 82).[10]

Our philosopher may say at this point that there has been a serious misunderstanding. For, of course, to prepare tools we may need some further tools. But we need not regress to infinity. There is a 'cut-off' point. We can prepare our first set of tools with our hands which, then, function as tools, but we do not need any further tools to prepare

[10]Russell, B., 1959, p. 82.

them. For they are 'given' to us. We are born with them and we grow up with them. Similarly we have inborn faculties (*indriyas*) which help us to see, to know. There are therefore means (of knowing), for which we do not need any further means.

Alternately, taking a lead form Akṣapāda Gotama, we can change the imagery and say that we need light to see other things but we do not need further light to see that light itself. Imagine a pitch dark room where nothing, no furniture, is visible. Put on the lamp and everything is revealed (becomes visible) thereby. Although the lamp itself forms part of the furniture, do we use another lamp to reveal it? The answer is no, and therefore, our philosopher argues that for revealing 'objects' we need the 'means', but for revealing the 'means' we do not need any further 'means'.

Our critic may, however, continue the debate. The philosopher may avoid, in the above manner, the fatal regress to infinity, but there arise some serious questions which will make him still vulnerable. First he has obviously introduced, in the course of his argument, a dichotomy, by marking off one set of items as 'means' and the other set as 'objects' (*prameya*). Such a dichotomy must be based upon a dichotomizing principle. Since the above argument is essentially based upon this dichotomy it is incumbent upon our philosopher to explain this dichotomy and to spell out the difference between the first set and the second. As Nāgārjuna insisted: *viśeṣa-hetuś ca vaktavyaḥ*. ('And the reason, for such differentiation, should be stated'). What singles out the 'means' from the 'objects'? What singles out the exploiter from the exploited?[11]

What exactly is being asked here? The philosopher has to answer satisfactorily why a member of the first set behave differently from that of the second set, why one, for example, does not stand in need of being established or revealed to us by a 'means' while the other does. What accounts for this difference of behaviour among things? It will not be a good explanation to say that it is the *nature* of one kind of 'things' to reveal and that of the other to be revealed, for that will be hardly more helpful than saying, as we have already said, that one set comprises the 'means' while the other set the 'objects'. For, in philosophy appeal to the nature of things is almost as good, (or as bad), if not more reputable, as appeal to whims or the Providence.

[11]This question is pertinent even in modern socio-political context where old categorization seems to vanish.

Nāgārjuna criticized the 'light' analogy as follows:

'It may be said—my 'means' of knowing establishes both itself and the other. As it has been said: Fire (i.e., the light) reveals itself in the same way as it does others. The 'means' likewise establishes itself and the others . . . In reply we say: (verse 34) This analogy is improper. Fire does not reveal itself. For unlike the pot, fire is not seen to be unrevealed in darkness . . . If it were the case that just as the pot is first revealed by fire while it lies in darkness and afterwards being revealed by fire (light) it is perceived, similarly fire being unrevealed by fire first lie in darkness and afterwards it is revealed by fire itself, then it would happen that fire reveals itself. But this is not so'.[12]

The source of Nāgārjuna's light-analogy is recorded in the *Nyāyasūtra* 2.1.19, which cites the analogy of the lamp-light. In reply to the objection raised in *Nyāyasūtra*. 2.1.18 that if a 'means' is not revealed by another 'means' it remains forever unrevealed or unestablished to us, it says, 'it is established like the lamp-light'. If this means that a 'means' is to be regarded as self-revealing like the lamp-light, then Nāgārjuna's criticism of this analogy as being wrong and confusing applies here.

Nyāyasūtra 2.1.19, however, presents an exegetical problem.[13] For it is not in accord with the prevailing view of the later Nyāya school. The standard Nyāya view is that a 'means' (*pramāṇa*) is not self-revealing but needs another 'means' to reveal itself. This position is formulated in technical Sanskrit as that a 'means' or even a cognitive event called knowing is not self-validating but validated by another (not *svatah* but *parataḥ prāmāṇya*). Commentators like Vātsyāyana, therefore, tried to interpret this *sūtra* to make it compatible wit the standard Nyāya view.

Vātsyāyana explained that the light of the lamp becomes a 'means' when it is an aid to an act of perception of a visible object, but the same lamp-light becomes itself an 'object' of another perception caused by its contact with the sense of sight. That is to say, the light is a 'means' when it helps us to see an 'object' and an 'object' when it is itself seen. It is also argued by Vātsyāyana that the light is an 'object' not only of perception but also of inference or even other type of cognitive event. For example, the light (i.e. the presence of light) is inferable on the basis of the visibility of other 'objects', and hence it becomes an 'object'

[12]Nāgārjuna, *Vigrahavyānartanī* verse 34 and *vṛtti*.

[13]Vātsyāyana, under *Nyāyasūtra* 2.1.19.

of inference. Vātsyāyana's own example was slightly different.[14] However, the point is nevertheless made that it is perfectly natural for a 'means' to be revealed by another 'means' just as the lamp-light as a 'means' reveals other things and is also revealed as an 'object' by another perception. This process need not regress to infinity. For it is not essential for every 'means' to be known or revealed to us first before it can act as a 'means'. We see with our eyes, the sense of sight, but we cannot see the sense itself. We can infer that the sense of sight (the eye) exists in us from the fact that we can see, but the fact of seeing does not depend upon our *knowing* of the sense of sight. To refute the previous analogy, in order to use the money in my pocket I would have to know that I have the money there, but in order to use my ear-organ, sense of hearing, to hear a noise, I do not have to know first (except under some unusual circumstances) that this is my sense of hearing. We do not say to ourselves before we can hear, for example, 'I have a sense of hearing, let me use it'.

Nāgārjuna rejects the analogy between light and the 'means' of knowing, but it is not difficult to see that he does not succeed completely in this rejection. For what does he mean when he claims that light does not reveal itself? Is it, according to him, meaningless to say that light reveals itself? Further, if light does not reveal itself, does it simply mean that it is revealed by something else? Or, is it revealed at all? Or, is it not revealed at all? Probably it will be claimed by Nāgārjuna that it does not make any sense to say that light is revealed. For the expression 'light is revealed' may pre-suppose a prior existence of light before its revelation.

Our philosopher may concede the point. It is truly an awkward formulation. 'Light reveals objects' simply means, let us recognize, 'There is revelation of objects'. It is only a stylistic device to separate in thought and language agent, action and the object-patient. Similarly one may say that 'there is light' also means simply 'there is revelation of objects'. But if this is conceded then our philosopher argues that the statement that the means of knowing reveals or establishes the object is similarly a convenient linguistic/stylistic device. If this is so, then Nāgārjuna has raised a meaningless question to confuse the issue. He attacked the proposition, viz. 'the objects are established/revealed by the means' by raising the question: what then does establish or reveal those 'means'? The question here undoubtedly presupposes that

[14]Ibid.

the statement 'X reveals or establishes the means of knowledge' is at least a significant statement whatever X may be. But if, as a Nāgārjunian has argued, the statement 'Light reveals/establishes light (itself)', is regarded as meaningless so that the analogy between the light and the 'means' of knowing would have to be rejected, then the statement 'so-and-so reveals/establishes the 'means' of knowing' can be equally regarded as meaningless or a vacuous statement. This implies that Nāgārjuna himself has lost the ground (the 'presupposition') for raising the question he has raised. It may be only a stylistic variation to say that the 'means' reveals itself just as one says 'light reveals itself'. A Nāgārjunian may say that we make a 'category mistake' if we claim to say that light reveals itself, for we are warranted to say only that there is light (here/now). If, however, 'light reveals itself is only a stylistic variation of 'there is light', then the charge of category mistake is neutralized. But similarly, 'the "means" reveals itself' can be claimed with equal force to be a stylistic variation for saying 'there is a "means" of knowing', or 'a "means" of knowing has occurred'.

The above does not answer, however, at least two other crucial questions that Nāgārjuna has raised. First, if the 'means' does not need any further 'means' in order to be established or revealed, then it contradicts our philosopher's original position (cf. *Hīyate vādaḥ*), i.e., everything, every 'object' (which must include the 'means' too, for what else the means would be if they are not also 'objects', i.e. do not constitute the 'furniture' of reality?) is revealed or established by some means or other. Second, if the 'objects' and the 'means' are so radically different from each other, as is implied by the philosopher's position above, then how can one account for this radical difference (cf. *vaiṣamikatva*)?[15]

Nāgārjuna was, however, not a sceptic, but a Buddhist, although he used the sceptical method in the above manner to refute any proposed philosophical view about reality. If scepticism is treated as a philosophical attitude rather than a theory, and perhaps consistency demands that we take scepticism in this way, then Nāgārjuna is in the company of a number of other philosophers in the Indian tradition, such as Sañjaya before him, and Jayarāśi and Śriharṣa who followed him. Each of these four belonged to such separate schools as Buddhism, Vedānta, Ajñāna and Materialism, but shared, as I have already claimed, a common philosophic methodology which I have

[15]Nāgārjuna, *Vigrahavyāvartanī*, Verse 2.

called scepticism. I have remarked earlier that Indian scepticism is distinguishable from modern Western scepticism or even from the old Greek scepticism. However, similarities among these different forms of scepticism are obvious. For example, a critique of the possibility of knowledge, among other things, formed an essential part of such a philosophical activity.

The Indian sceptic, in one sense, is closer in spirit and in method to the Greek sceptic, than to his Cartesian counterpart. Modern scepticism, as Hume understood it, is 'a necessary preparative to the study of philosophy'.[16] A Cartesian sceptic therefore hopes to reach 'truth' or certainty, i.e. an indubitable and incorrigible basis for his knowledge. Russell echoes a similar view when he claims that Descartes' 'methodical doubt', which consists roughly in doubting whatever seemed doubtful, constitutes the essence of philosophic activity, for this leads to the knowledge of the existence of our sense data, which, according to him, appear to be indubitable.[17] The tradition of Cartesian scepticism, if it can be called scepticism at all, leads more often than not, to philosophical subjectivism, or phenomenalism. Indian scepticism is, on the contrary, more general. It is more non-committal and more dialectically oriented. Neither Nāgārjuna nor Sañjaya, for example, supported any ontology or doctrines such as subjectivism or phenomenalism. True, in the Buddhist tradition, both before and after Nāgārjuna, a sort of phenomenalism and subjectivism developed and persisted. But it is significant that the Indian sceptics we have chosen here to deal with, carefully and systematically avoided adherence to any such doctrines in their argumentation.

Nāgārjuna faces the challenge that if he is sceptical of each philosophical theory of reality because it suffers from some inadequacy and inconsistency, or contains some latent contradiction, then that position itself becomes another philosophical theory of reality and therefore, following his own method, that proposition can be shown to be self-contradictory. In other words, if he says every being is empty of its own being, then that proposition itself loses its own being and therefore becomes empty. In reply, Nāgārjuna says that he has no proposition to defend; if he had any, he would be guilty of the fault that is being ascribed to him. He is pleased with the situation of having no proposition to defend.[18] Sañjaya has been accused in the Pali

[16]Hume, D., *Inquiry*, XII, i.

[17]Russell, B., p. 151.

[18]Compare with Sextus, Nāgārjuna, *Vigrahavyānartanī*, verse 29.

canons, as belonging to 'those recluses and brahmins who wriggle like eels (or like beanstalks, cf. *amara-vivkhepika*'). For being asked such questions as 'Is there an after-life'? 'Will this being survive'? 'Is there any result of good or bad actions'? 'Is there no result of good and bad actions'? Sañjaya and his followers try to avoid giving any definite answer by conducting the debate in a peculiar manner. Sañjaya would say, 'I do not say yes, or it is so. Nor do I say it is thus. Nor do I say it otherwise. Nor do I say no. Nor do I deny the denial i.e., say not to no'. This, of course, results in scepticism as regards the possibility of knowing any answer to these questions.

The Buddhist canons describe Sañjaya and his followers on the one hand as dull and stupid and on the other hand recognize them as well-known and famous recluses having a number of followers (*nato, yasassi, saṃghi, gani*). Their method of debate may be reminiscent of the Greek sophists as well as Plato's denouncement of them. But it is clear, as I have already noted, that unlike the Greek sophists, these recluses did not debate for gathering money and fame and thereby earning livelihood. They adopted this method of debate because they believed, as the Pali texts inform us, that to claim to have *known* answers to such questions, when they did not, would be a false claim and hence morally wrong. 'If not knowing it is thus or so, I assert it is thus and so, I make a false claim', says Sañjaya. To make a false claim is *morally* wrong, it creates 'perturbation' (*vyāghāta*) and puts a hindrance to mental peace which should be the goal of all seekers after truth.[19]

In sum, Nāgārjuna shows that the generally accepted style of philosophizing, called he *pramāṇa* theory, involves at best a distortion and at worst a falsity. Hence it should be discarded or be recognized as what it is, a fabrication, a convenient myth (cf. *samvṛti*), the value of which lies only in making our life work smoothly and inter subjective communication successful. Beyond this point, however, Nāgārjuna parts company with the sceptics. Along with the sceptics, he says that the (dogmatic) philosopher is faced with only two unsavoury devices. Either he begs the question while talking about evidence or 'ways' of knowing, such as perception and inference, by suing a very questionable criterion to establish the standard of what should count as true, or, he regresses to infinity to find our criterion for this criterion and so on. Such argumentation, as far as Nāgārjuna is concerned, is supposed to lead us to have an insight (*prajña*) into

[19] *Dīgha Nikyāya*, I. 26.

the nature of what is ultimately real, (which is *emptiness* or the *nirvāṇa*, or, the Buddha). Such an insight cannot dawn upon us as long as we cling to dogmatic beliefs and the style of philosophizing that the *pramāṇa* theory tries to initiate us into. Unlike the sceptic, however, Nāgārjuna was not asking us to merely suspend our judgement on the question of knowledge, and its 'means', but recognize it as what it is, a fabrication of language. His 'emptiness' is neither nihilism (the view of the negative dogmatics), nor another view or a doctrine, but, as Candrakirti points out, quoting a *Buddhavacana*, it is like a purge that eliminates everything including itself.[20]

4.4 JAYARĀŚI

Jayarāśi was not a Buddhist. He was probably a follower of Bṛhaspati, for he quoted from what is designated as one of the sayings of Bṛhaspati. A follower of Bṛhaspati means, in the Indian context, a materialist, a crude anti-religious sceptic. His theory has been described by other philosophers, after the title of his book, *Tattva-upaplava*, the destruction of all (assumed) realities. Walter Rüben (p. 28) is, however, reluctant to call Jayarāśi a materialist for except paying a lip-service to Bṛhaspati, he does not propound any positive materialistic doctrine. According to Rüben, Jayarāśi's position is 'rather anti-philosophical, and in a definite sense agnostic'.[21] Jayatilleke, strangely enough, commented in his *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge* that Jayarāśi 'was not a sceptic, but an absolute nihilist'.[22] I disagree with Jayatilleke, and agree only partially with Rüben. Jayarāśi was, in my opinion, a physiological sceptic who continued the tradition of the early sceptic-dialecticians of India. Other materialists (followers of Cārvāka or Lokāyata) of India are said to accept sense-perception as the only 'means' of knowing what is there. But Jayarāśi criticized and rejected all the possible means of knowing including sense-perception and thereby denied the very possibility of knowledge. His method was not, at least explicitly, similar to that of the Cartesian doubt. He used the Nāgārjunian dialectic crystallized in the form of *kotis* and *prasangas* (cf. reduction).

All the *pramāṇa*-theorists, the Naiyāyikas, Sāṁkhyas, Buddhists,

[20]Matilal, B.K. (1973), pp. 61–63.
[21]Ruben, W., p. 54.
[22]Jayatillekl, K. N., p. 82.

Mimāṃsakas and Jainas, believed that the business of philosophy is to first formulate faultless definitions to different ways and means of knowing and then to specify and categorize the 'objects' ascertained or captured by such knowledge. Such definitions should, in principle, consist in articulating the unique character or characteristics of the items to be defined such that such unique character will help us to clearly and unambiguously distinguish them from what they are not. In other words, definability ensured, it was believed, their intelligibility, and intelligibility, in turn, their reality. Formulation of a definition in this sense is, in fact, a *project* of the philosopher by virtue of which he is supposed to carry on his philosophic activity based, apparently, upon the principle: no entity without distinguishability (see my 'Definition and Lakṣaṇa').

Jayarāśi challenges this method as a whole. He argues: The 'means' of knowing (such as perception and inference) are established through (the articulation of) a 'faultless' definition or a defining characteristic, and the 'objects' are established through such 'means' of knowing. Now if such a defining characteristic is proven not to exist, how can the 'means' and the 'object' be spoken about as real?

After setting his stage in this manner, Jayarāśi proceeds to subject all the available definition of perception, inference etc. given by other philosophers, to trenchant criticism. I shall briefly mention only a part of his critique of the Nyāya theory of perception and then refer to this sceptical conclusion.

Nyāyasūtra 1.1.4 used the adjective 'non-deviating' or 'non-promiscuous' to distinguish veridical perception from the non-veridical ones.[23] Jayarāśi asks: how this 'non-promiscuity' is to be understood?[24] (1) Is it because the perceptual experience concerned is generated by the assemblage of faultless causal factors? Or, (2) Is it because there is no contradiction? Or, (3) Is it because (as Vātsyāyana argued) it leads to activity that is crowned with success? Or, (4) Is there any other way? After formulating these possible alternatives, he proceeds to refute them one by one: Suppose the first. How do we know that these causal factors are faultless? Certainly not by perception, for, among other things, I cannot *perceive* whether my faculty or organ of perception (eye) is not faulty. (I see whether other things are faulty with the eye, but I cannot see the eye to detect whether it is faultless).

[23]*Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.4 . . . *'avyabhicāri'*. See various interpretations by commentators such as Uddyotakara, Vācaspati, and Jayanta.

[24]Jayarāśi, pp. 9–11.

Nor can we ascertain its faultlessness through inference. For no further evidence is forthcoming for the proposed inference. The *Pramāṇa* theorist may claim that the sensory experience is itself the evidence on the basis of which we can infer its special character, i.e., its truth or non-promiscuity with the facts. Jayarāśi rejects this by saying that it begs the question. For inference itself is another means of knowledge, and of course, the same question as regards its infallibility can be raised again.

Moreover, Jayarāśi says, if the source from which a knowledge is derived is dubious, the so-called knowledge itself is turned into a doubt. The statement of a person can never be trustworthy if we can neither verify it independently nor be free from the doubt about the reliability of the person. Similarly, since it is possible that the senses can be either good or faulty, the sense-generated knowledge will never be free from doubt. In other words, it is never possible for us to reach the indubitable base of our knowledge which will guarantee its infallibility or non-promiscuity.

Suppose the second alternative. Jayarāśi argues: Do I know the non-promiscuous nature of my cognitive experience from the non-arising of any contradiction so far? If so, then I will be in doubt as to whether this non-arising of the (relevant) contradiction is due to the fact that I have *in fact* a veridical perceptual experience or whether such non-arising (non-occurrence) of the contradictory experience is due to some contingent factor, namely, malfunctioning of the causal factors that would have generated such experience. It is argued that both are possible and whenever there are two or more contrary possibilities, we have in effect, a doubt, not knowledge.

Thus, for example, when one sees, from a distance, the mirage-water in the (summer) sunshine, his illusory experience is not contradicted unless he goes near. In fact, years may pass, says Jayarāśi, but still his illusory experience will not be contradicted if the causal factors to generate the contradiction never co-operate. Therefore, non-arising of the relevant contradiction cannot establish verticality of our experience. Besides, Jayarāśi argues, the lack of such a contradiction may (in a way) be a pointer to the possibility of such a contradiction. In other words, since the supposed knowledge here is *a posteriori*, it is true that a contradiction is conceivable and if a contradiction is conceivable, a contradiction is possible.

Let us suppose the third alternative: It was Vātsyāyana who argued that we know a perceptual or cognitive experience to be non-promiscuous through its property E where E is the potency of this

cognition to lead to successful activity or fulfil proper expectation. If this is so, then our perception of a flower, or a garland, or sandal paste or a woman would lead in each case to our bodily contact with such objects, and this would establish its non-promiscuity. But now the question arises, whether the property E, potency to lead to the object or 'success', is known in each case or it remains unknown. If it remains unknown, how do we derive non-promiscuity from it as an evidence? For if we do not know that E exists in the cognitive state concerned, we cannot derive its non-promiscuity. If, however, it is known that the cognitive state concerned has E, how does this second 'knowledge' is known to have the property E? In other words, a cognitive experience amounts to knowledge if and only if it possesses E. Now, if E is unknown, then we cannot decide, with regard to a particular cognitive state, whether it is knowledge or not. But if E is known, then our knowledge of E, in order to be an instance of knowledge, must have E and be known to have E. And this can be repeated ad infinitum.

Moreover, does 'E' mean 'potency to lead to the *same* object' or 'potency to lead to a *similar* object'? If the first, then even a veridical perception of a mass of water in a flowing river or a lake would lack E. For we will never be able to reach the same mass of water at the same place in any case. This means that such a veridical perception would then be indistinguishable from a non-veridical perception of mirage-water. If, however, we talk about the *similar* object, not the *same*, then anybody (any magician) can first trick us with a 'trick' jug of water and then replace it with a real jug (without our knowing it), and in that case we will be allowed to call our first perception veridical because it will have the property E.

Jayarāśi continues in this manner sometimes in the vein of what we may call a Cartesian sceptic, sometimes with the zeal of a dialectician, to refute his philosophic opponents and to reach his sceptical conclusion. For him, all philosophic questions remain open and in practical life, he recommends common sense and normal behaviour. He says in the beginning that those who understand the ultimate purpose recommend that we should follow the ordinary worldly behaviour (cf. *laukika mārga*), for 'with regard to ordinary behaviour the wise resemble the fool or the child'.[25] One cannot miss an unintentional echo of Sextus in this comment:

[25]Jayarāśi, p. 1.

'We live in accordance with the normal rules of life, undogmatically, seeing that we cannot remain wholly inactive'.[26]

4.5 ŚRĪHARṢA

Śriharṣa followed Jayarāśi in his attempt to show that all proposed definitions or demonstrations of philosophic categories, the means of knowing, such as perception and inference, and the objects of knowing are illegitimate and unsuccessful, for they fail to avoid the obvious faults of overextension or under-extension. In the first part of the book, he tackles, however, the sceptic's problem of keeping the tradition of philosophic debate alive even when the sceptic is, as he has to be, sceptical of the means of conducting a successful philosophic debate. The usual charge is that if a debater refuses to admit the validity of the means and method by which a position is argued for or against, then he forfeits his right to enter into such a debate. Nāgārjuna gave, as we have seen, a succinct answer to this charge. Śriharṣa, while expressly acknowledging his indebtedness in this regard, to Nāgārjuna, answers this charge very elaborately with his dialectical skill. Śriharṣa deals with what may be called the sceptical paradox as it was dealt with by Nāgārjuna. Simply stated, the paradox is this: If it is concluded that all statements are empty i.e., devoid of any meaning (or 'essence' = *svabhāva*) that we may assign to them, we are committed to the position that this thesis (just stated) is itself *empty*. Both Nāgārjuna and Śriharṣa gave the same reply. The thesis just stated in itself not a thesis, not a statement, not an *assertion*.

To avoid the problem involved in self-reference in this case, these philosophers did not argue for a distinction, that is by now well-known in modern philosophy, between the object-language and the meta-language. They on the contrary take another way out and claim that it is possible to maintain such a position (that all thesis is empty) without really asserting it. A. N. Prior, in explaining J. Buridan's paradox about 'no statement is true' suggested a similar way out:

'But if God were to annihilate all negative propositions, there would in fact be no negative propositions, even if this were not then being asserted by any proposition at all. In short, *it can be that no proposition is negative, though it cannot be that 'no proposition is negative is true'*.[27]

[26]Sextus, I, p. 23.
[27]Prior, A. N., p. 144.

Making a 'parody' of this, a Nāgārjunite might say: If the Buddha were to empty each proposition of its meaning-essence, there would in fact be no non-empty thesis, even if *this* were not being *asserted* in any thesis at all. A true sceptic, therefore, cannot, as Strawson once said, state his position. It is possible, then, for a sceptic, to believe all beliefs to be dubious including the said belief in question!

To sample a little of Śriharṣa's argumentation. A philosopher (say a Naiyāyika) may claim that a debater is not entitled to debate if he denounces or destroys the very foundation of debate, viz., the efficacy or validity of any form of argument and evidence. For if nothing can really prove anything, it is better to be silent than debate. Śriharṣa says that this is not only an *unfair*, but also an *unfounded*, claim. It is unfair because a debater is not bound to take 'any oath' for accepting anything before he undertakes to debate. He does not break any 'law' even if the final thrust of his argument is to show that all arguments are no arguments as long as we take them to be proving something positively. As long as the opponent believes that inconsistency or citation of a counter-example destroys the thesis the opponent is trying to establish, our sceptic debater can fulfil his purpose simply by exposing such inconsistency or citing a counter-example. Our sceptic debater himself may not, in fact he should not, have much 'faith' in the method itself, but as long as his opponent has that faith, our debater has every right to play the game. It is unfair to turn the 'table' against him, for he does not believe really in the efficacy of the method. The claim of the philosopher is also unfounded, for, Śriharṣa argued, in the history of philosophy no sceptic or sceptically inclined philosophers, i.e. those who did not accept ultimate validity of proof etc., really remained silent. They on the contrary participated in lively debates enthusiastically. One can easily cite examples of the materialists or the Mādhyamika Buddhists and the Advaitins. Therefore our Naiyāyika-philosopher cannot use the above argument. ('If you do not believe in argument or evidence, do not use them') as a new kind of 'silencing charm' to set the matter at rest. In short, philosophers do argue and argue mostly against a sceptic opponent, and hence the onus of being silent lies not on the sceptic, but on the philosopher himself.

4.6 SEXTUS

This brings us to discuss this type of scepticism *apropos* another variety of scepticism, Pyrrhonism, as depicted by Sextus Empiricus. Chisholm

has shown how Sextus' Pyrrhonism becomes relevant for the twentieth century empiricism and phenomenalism. It is indeed surprising to see how close the Indian sceptics were with their Greek counterparts. Burnet in a footnote of his *Early Greek philosophy* had pointed out that Pyrrhonims was influenced by the Indian thought, namely Buddhism, for Pyrrho was supposed to have visited India with Alexander the Great, and to have studied under the Indian Gymnosophists.[28] There may be some grain of truth in such a claim about the Indian influence upon Pyrrhonism, for similarities are unmistakable. Jayatilleke has discussed this point and argued (perhaps rightly) that Pyrrho was most probably under the influence of Indian scepticism as propounded by Sañjaya, and not really under the direct influence of Buddhism. One cannot however agree with Jayatilleke's contention that while the Greek sceptics used their *epoché* (suspension of judgement) to gain the state of *ataraxia* (unperturbedness), the Indian sceptics like Sañjaya did not value mental equanimity. For after all, Sañjaya, as I have already argued, was a respectable teacher and a recluse and at that time in India almost all recluses were concerned with equanimity, peace and the final beatitude. Sañjaya's own ground for avoiding adherence to any doctrine should be an indication of his moral concern (i.e. a false claim to knowledge disturbs peace and hinders moral life). In fact, the picture of an Indian sceptic at this period was not very different from that of 'the nature sceptic' depicted by Sextus.

Arne Naess, who, in his recent study of *Scepticism*, has disagreed with Chisholm's evaluation of Sextus as an expounder of certain philosophic doctrines (such as phenomenalism or a positivistic theory of signs) or as at least a subscriber to them, gives the following account of a mature sceptic from Sextus:[29]

> 'The mature sceptic decides neither for the positive nor for the negative in relation to any doctrine, but allows both possibilities to stand open . . . To his surprise he eventually finds that epoche leads to, or is accompanied by, just that peace of mind (ataraxia) which he set out to achieve by finding truth. The mature sceptic will not, of course, claim that there is a necessary connection between *epoché* and *ataraxio*'.

How Sañjaya achieved his peace or beatitude we do not know for certain. But we definitely know how he avoided mental perturbation

[28]Burnet, T. J., p. 82n.
[29]Naess, A., p. 5.

that arises due to false claim to knowledge. Scepticism as a philosophic method might have been started in India by Sañjaya. But the Buddha's own scepticism about any extreme view and hence his emphasis on the Middle Way must also be noted in this connection. By Nāgārjuna's time, old trickeries, quibbling and equivocation were no longer allowed to stand unpunished and unrefuted, thanks to the prevalence of many Vāda (debate) manuals such as that in the Nyāyasūtras. Philosophic arguments were conducted in terms of *prasanga* (cf. reduction) and *koṭi-vikalpa* (examination of various mutually incompatible alternatives or possibilities). Nāgārjuna was undoubtedly a champion of this method, and hence this path was followed by Jayarāśi and Śriharṣa.

Sextus apparently distinguishes the sceptics from the Dogmatists in that while the latter would claim that they have found at least one truth or that truth cannot be found, the former would neither claim to have found the truth nor claim that the truth cannot be found, but would persist in seeking (Naess, p. 4). If the sceptics claim that they *know* that truth cannot be found then they would also be Dogmatists, according to Sextus, although in a negative sense. In act, the last kind is called by Sextus the Academicians. A sceptic should avoid this pitfall of negative dogmatism. This advice of caution by Sextus becomes particularly meaningful when we see that Nāgārjuna time and again comes back to the same theme i.e., the rejection of a proposition (or all propositions for that matter) should not, and need not, be construed as another proposition (maybe even a negative one). If there is any philosophic lesson to be learnt from the so-called and much discussed Buddhist tetralemma or *catuṣkoti* (four-fold negation), it is this: our saying no to a proposition or a question need not be construed as an assent to the corresponding negative proposition or question. (See ch. 6).

4.7 MODERN SCEPTICISM

Modern scepticism is not generally understood in this way, for a sceptic is usually regarded today as a negative dogmatist, in the sense of Sextus. But Pyrrhonism and the Indian variety of scepticism (the way I have developed it here) are theoretically, if not historically or genetically, members of the same family. Sextus has argued how the sceptic's statement 'no statement is true' would be self-defeating

as an assertion: if it is true, then it is false. And, therefore, Sextus's sceptic studiously avoids the assertive way of using the languages (Naess, pp. 6–7). One cannot miss here the point that exactly for the same reason Nāgārjuna tried very meticulously and laboriously to avoid any assertion: 'I have no proposition (thesis) to assert or defend, therefore I am not guilty of the fault you attribute to me', (Vv. verse 29).

Hume argued that Descartes had advocated a provisional scepticism. It is a species of scepticism which philosophers inculcate, according to Hume, 'as a sovereign preservative against error and precipitate judgement'.[30] Descartes himself dissociated his position from the sceptics, as he says:

'Not that in this I imitated *the sceptics*, who doubt only that they may doubt, and seek nothing beyond uncertainty itself for, on the contrary, my design was singly to find ground of assurance and to cast aside the loose earth and sand in, that I might reach the rock or the clay'.[31]

Hume regarded this type of scepticism ('when more moderate') as a very reasonable and necessary '*antecedent* to all study and philosophy'. Even Vātsyāyana, in the Nyāya tradition, recognizes that some form of scepticism or doubt is an essential pre-condition for any philosophical enquiry.[32]

Although the Cartesian method is designed, as Descartes says, to reach 'the rock and clay' by rejecting 'loose earth and sand', a sort of radical scepticism, nevertheless, seems to be implicit in 'the Project of Pure Enquiry'. Hume, therefore, comments:

'The Cartesian Doubt, therefore, were it ever possible to be attained by any human creature (as it plainly is not) would be entirely incurable, and no reasoning could ever bring us to a state of assurance and conviction upon any subject'.[33]

This implies, therefore, that the rock and clay that Descartes wanted to attain would be ever elusive if we indulged in this radical form of

[30]Hume, D. *Inquiry* XII.

[31]Descartes, R., *A Discourse on Method*, Part III, p. 23.

[32]Vātsyāyna's comment under *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.1. Philosophic investigation cannot be conducted with regard to an object that is completely determined, nor to what is completely unknown. What then? To an object that is dubious.

[33]Hume, D. *Inquiry* XII, Pt. 1.

scepticism. Russell has argued that it is impractical to maintain the attitude of a complete sceptic:

'If we adopt the attitude of a complete sceptic, placing ourselves wholly outside all knowledge, we are demanding what is impossible, and our scepticism can never be refuted. For all refutation must begin with some piece of knowledge which the disputants share: from blank doubt, no argument can begin'.[34]

(*Problems of Philosophy*, p. 156)

It seems to me that Russell's argument is exactly similar to that of the Naiyāyikas against the sceptic debaters. I have given above how Śriharṣa answers this objection against scepticism. Refutation may involve some knowledge-claim, but such minimal knowledge-claim may only be provisional, and the sceptic can simply 'borrow' it from his opponent's fund of knowledge.

Indian scepticism has, however, certain slants which are not found in Pyrrhonism. Alternatively, one can say that there are certain features of Pyrrhonism that are absent in its Indian counterpart. A Pyrrhonist while maintaining his scepticism in theory would obey or follow in practice the normal rules of his society, and observe tradition, laws and customs. A Nāgārjunian will, however, be a Buddhist and a follower of Sañjaya will be at least a recluse. Therefore, in practice, they would follow the duties of a recluse or a Buddhist and spend their lives in meditation or some such activities in search of insight or illumination.

There was on the whole definite connection between Indian scepticism and Indian mysticism. But a mystic in India usually becomes a non-conformist regarding social behaviour. A mystic-sceptic may claim, although it will be difficult for a pure sceptic to assert or claim anything, that truths are self-evident and needs no philosophising about it. Indian tradition allows that a transition is possible in some cases from scepticism to mysticism, but a Pyrrhonist, as Sextus describes him, can only develop into 'a mature sceptic', and not a dogmatist or an Academician; for, if Sextus's arguments are right, he can be a conformist while remaining a sceptic, and his ordinary way of life will not be disturbed in any way by his scepticism. For a Pyrrhonist, truths seem to be ever elusive, for the Indian sceptic-mystic, however, they are either ever elusive or self-evident.

The lesson to be learned from the sceptics is that some

[34]Russell, B., *PP*, p. 150.

philosophical problems might have no real solutions, and this is probably true of the oldest of them. Conceding this point Thomas Nagel has recently stated:

'In that case such insight as we can achieve depends on maintaining a strong grasp of the problem instead of abandoning it, and coming to understand the failure of each new attempt at a solution, and of earlier attempts. (That is why we study the works of philosophers like Plato and Berkeley, whose views are accepted by no one). Unsolvable problems are not for that reason unreal'.[35]

[35]Nagel, T., p. xii.

CHAPTER FIVE

Word and Object—I

5.1 TERMINOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

A philosophy of religion, to the extent it is considered as philosophy, presupposes a philosophy of language, more specifically, a theory of meaning. It is being increasingly realized today that understanding of a particular theory of meaning or philosophy of language is very basic to our understanding of a philosophical theory, and philosophy of religion need not be any exception.

In recent discussion of philosophy of religion, questions about the meaning and truth of religious statements have gained an overall popularity. (Some, however, are understandably sceptical of the usefulness of this discussion in philosophy of religion). One position that brings the importance of language into focus is called Wittgenstein's Fideism. According to this stand, the criteria of the meaning and truth of religious statements are to be found wholly within the religion itself.

My discussion of the Nyāya and the Buddhist theories of meaning (in the next two chapters) has been partially motivated by the above consideration. Besides, I feel that an outline of these two theories of meaning should form part of a general discussion of the Indian philosophy of religion because it prepares the ground for a discussion of the ineffable ultimate reality which any philosophy of religion might come to discuss at some time or another. Since my sixth lecture is entitled 'Ineffability', I wish to devote two lectures before it, to the problems of meaning and expressibility faced by the Indian philosophers.

The Nyāya theory of meaning discusses the difficulties associated

with a word's denotation of an individual, and in particular, a proper name's relation with the name-bearer. If 'God' or 'Brahman' is a proper name, it must share some common difficulties with a host of other proper names, which we use in our intelligible discourse.

I shall discuss the Nyāya theory in the background of some modern developments in the theory of proper names, especially the theories of J. S. Mill and of Kripke and Putnam.

Consider the following sentences (literally translated from Sanskrit) which are used almost synonymously:

(1) The word goes to the object (meaning).
(2) The word applies to the object.
(3) The word is *in* the object./The word lies in the object.
(4) The word speaks of/talks about the object./The word *'says'* the object.
(5) The word expresses/reveals the object.
(6) The word presents/conveys the object.
(7) The word is the speaker of the object, the object is speakable by the word.

All these expressions try to capture the relation of the word to the object (*artha*), such that as soon as the word is uttered the attentive listener understands the object meant. In the above, I have avoided using such common expressions as 'stands for', 'refers to', 'denotes' and 'means', 'signifies' which are current in contemporary philosophical literature. It is, to be sure, a semantic relation that we are concerned with here. But the philosophical style of the Sanskritists presents the above variety, and it may be well to keep them before us in the beginning. Since modern philosophical literature is cluttered with discussions, criticisms and counter-criticisms of various theories of meaning and reference, and since the philosophers whose views I shall be discussing were unaware of all this discussion, and wrote in Sanskrit some 2000 to 1000 years ago, I thought it would be better to take some precautionary measure before we jump to any facile comparison and unwarranted conclusion about what was intended by these philosophers.

But the purpose of this philosophic activity is not to make things obscure or opaque. To avoid this problem, we must choose a term from the current philosophical literature,—a term that will come close to the intuitive 'sense' of the above expressions. Which term may we choose? Most of the terms used above are metaphorical in some way or other. At least in their English translations, they are clearly metaphorical, and in their Sanskrit versions also, they are not exactly

literal. This is not a real problem, for almost the same may be said of some of the English expressions used for the same purpose: 'stands for', 'means', and even 'refers'. If some of them are not so overtly metaphorical, they are at least used in a somewhat extended sense in these contexts. Compare, for example, H. P. Grice's contrasts between 'Those spots mean measles' and the other, non-natural uses of the word 'mean'.[1] A similar point is made about the verb 'refer' by L. Linsky.[2] He says 'The question "to whom does the phrase "the so-and-so" refer'? is, in general, an odd question. What might be asked, e.g., 'Who is the President of the United States'? 'To whom are you referring'; not 'To whom does the phrase "The President of the United States" refer'?[3]

I would choose, as a working hypothesis, the verb 'designate' to do the job for the name-object relation in my exegesis of the Sanskrit philosophers. It seems to me that the word 'designate' is a little less 'loaded', but this too may not be true. And in some cases, I might face difficulties in handling the term 'designate' to suit a Sanskrit context where the word is even thought to be *located* in the object it means. But I will cross the bridge when I will come to it. (I am tempted to choose 'refers to' but I resist it at the outset. There will be occasions when I will be talking about reference and use the verb 'refers to' to suit my purpose.)

5.2 SOME MODERN VIEWS

In discussing one's theory of meaning, it has been found convenient and fruitful to talk in terms of distinction between one or the other of the following pairs, denotation-connotation (J. S. Mill), reference-sense (Frege), or extension-intension. Although it is true that these pairs are not in any sense identical or parallel, and they do not, to be sure, serve the same purpose, but it seems to me significant that most philosophers found it useful to introduce a dichotomy in order to resolve the philosophic problem of meaning affinity among

[1]Grice, H. P., pp. 39–41.

[2]Linsky, L. p. 117.

[3]Ibid., pp. 119–20. In fact, idioms of both philosophical Sanskrit and philosophical English are parallel in this respect. In Sanskrit we say 'I say, or, speak about, fire by the word "fire", and commonly 'The word "fire" says, or speaks about, the thing fire'. In English, it is possible to say 'I refer to fire by the word "fire", and commonly 'The word "fire" refers to fire (in this sentence etc.)'.

themselves. Roughly speaking, general terms like 'cow' or 'human' have both denotation and connotation (in Mill's sense). We also say that some singular terms, i.e., the definite descriptions, both denote and connote. Ordinary proper names, such as 'John' or 'Aristotle', are also said to denote, although it is more and more becoming the practice to say that they *refer to* or designate individuals. Do they have connotation? Mill's answer apparently was 'No'. But this theory has been disputed by the modern philosophers, such as Frege, Russell and Strawson.[4]

Frege introduced the distinction between the sense and the reference (*Bedeutung*) of means, i.e., proper names and definite descriptions, and he extended this terminology to make them applicable to declarative sentences. In Frege's language they were signs with their senses and their references. A sign, so it is said, refers to (or denotes) its reference and *expresses* its sense. And since Frege said that the sense is a 'mode of presentation' of the reference, it may be assumed that whatever may be the 'sense' of such a proper name as 'Cicero', it has to fix its reference, the man called Cicero. In other words, if the 'sense' is something like the 'connotation' of Mill, Frege's claim that proper names do have sense seems to refute Mill's claim that they are non-connotative. But it is not entirely clear whether Mill's 'connotation' and Frege's 'sense' are interchangeable concepts. Mill, however, did seem to believe that the ordinary proper names were also, purely and properly, *names*, in the sense that the whole of their meaning consisted in their standing for just those objects which they named (Dummett, p. 96), and in this respect, therefore, Frege's doctrine of the sense of proper names appeared to controvert Mill's thesis. To show that a proper name must have a sense (Sinn), Frege used the identity puzzle, i.e., the cognitive difference between (a) 'Cicero = Tully' and (b) 'Cicero = Cicero'. It seems that (a) is informative while (b) is trivial and Frege argued that this difference is due to the difference in *senses* of the two signs 'Cicero' and 'Tully'.

The sense of a name is usually what gives the criteria for identification of the object it names or refers to; it is the way in which we determine the reference. But since the criteria for identification vary from one person to another, and there is hardly any favoured and agreed way to determine the reference of an expression, our talk

[4]Frege's paper 'On Sense and Reference'. Russell, 'On Denoting' and Strawson, *Individuals*.

of sense seems to involve a subjective and transitory feature, having no great significance in the general theory of meaning.[5] Quine followed this line of criticism to record his scepticism about 'sense'. This critique, however, need not imply that the sense of a word consists of a mental image, for Frege strongly rejected such a construal of sense. Nor is it proper to ask anyone to tell what the sense of an expression is, or to say it by using an abstract expression primarily derived from the original one.

Carnap[6] said that Frege's reference-sense distinction as a method of semantical analysis was a particular form of what he called the general method of name-relation, and therefore it shared all the difficulties that arise in the method of name-relation in general, e.g., ambiguity, multiplicity of entities and unnecessary complications. Carnap argued that the name-relation method, although it is tacitly used by many philosophers to give analysis of meaning, is not a very suitable method for semantical analysis. Carnap's own method is called the method of extension and intension. This is developed by modifying and extending the customary concepts of class and property and introducing a concept of equivalence relation while the name-relation method regards an expression as a name of a concrete or abstract object. This method regards an expression (including proper-names) not as *naming* anything, but as *possessing* an intension and an extension.

Roughly the extension of a term 'cow' (a designator or a predicator in Carnap's language) is the class of cows and its intension is the property of being a cow (pp. 16–17). Carnap insists that properties or intensions in the way they were used in his system were perfectly intelligible concepts and the analysis of intension for a natural language was 'methodologically just as sound as the analysis of extension' (p. 236). The extension of an individual expression (e.g., a proper name or a definite description) is the individual which it refers to, and its intension is 'the individual concept expressed by it' (p. 41). The individual concept is, he admits, a concept of a new kind. Carnap's talk of intension in this manner was the precursor of the present-day possible-world semantics. Carnap also argued that his extension-intension distinction was an explication of the traditional

[5]Dummett, M., p. 102.
[6]Carnap, R., pp. 96–129.

denotation-connotation distinction (e.g., Mill's), while Frege's reference-sense distinction being a form of name-relation analysis tried to achieve a slightly different purpose, though undoubtedly the former is related to the latter (pp. 126–8). In effect, Carnap's criticisms of Frege's method were very serious, although, following his principle of tolerance, Carnap said that there was no incompatibility between the two theories.[7]

I would make two observations which, I think, are relevant for our transition to the next section. First, as has been already noted, philosophers have found it useful to resolve the general problem of meaning into a dichotomy by distinguishing between what may be called two different components of the cognitive meaning-complex. If we leave aside non-cognitive, emotive or aesthetic meanings, it seems that philosophers of meanings usually factorize the meaning-complex into two: one that is directly presented by the use of the word and the other that directs the word to the first. For reasons that will be explained in the next section, I shall call the first 'substance' component or the 'thing' component and the second, the 'property' component.

Second, it has been felt by some philosophers of language that there are words or expressions where these two factors coincide, or rather, one shrinks into the other. Mill's doctrine of non-connotative proper names, Russell's search for logically proper names, Kripke's theory of proper names, as rigid designators, and (I may add) the 'arbitrary name' (*yadṛcchā-śabda*) theory of proper names of the Sanskrit philosophers are all illustrations of this trend.

5.3 ANCIENT INDIAN THEORIES OF MEANING

Two very ancient philosophers of India formulated different theories of meaning in the course of their discussion of Pāṇini's grammar. They are Vājapyāyana and Vyāḍi. (Both were apparently grammarians in the Indian sense, by which I mean their exposition of Pāṇini's grammar not only led them to the discussion of the philosophy of language in particular but also they had independent philosophic views of their own). I have in earlier writings referred to them as the Universalist and the Individualist.[8] It will be helpful, as I have already

[7]Carnap, R., p. 128.
[8]Matilal, B.K. (1971), pp. 69, 101.

indicated, to refer to these two views as the 'attribute' theory of meaning and the 'substance' theory of meaning. I shall first reconstruct these views briefly from the fragmentary expositions of later commentators, Patañjali, Bhartṛhari and Helārāja.

The 'attribute' theory of meaning says that a word such as 'cow' designates an attribute, the universal cowness, and then with the help of that attribute one cognizes or identifies a cow-individual. The 'substance' theory of meaning says that the word 'cow' (used in a context where it is suitable to use 'a cow' in English) designates a cow, a substance or a particular. The attribute *cowness* obviously lends a helping hand by supplying the ground or basis for the designation in question (for otherwise why use the word 'a cow' to refer to the substance in question?). But the attribute is not *designated* by the word 'cow'. The function of the attribute *cowness* in this case is neither more nor less than that of the crow in the following example.[9] Somebody asks me, 'Which one is the house of Devadatta?' I answer pointing out, 'That one upon which a crow happens to be sitting'. In other words, the crow, an (in some philosophic sense) inessential mark of the house, serves only to identify what I am referring to. But after the house has been identified it does not serve any purpose any more. The word 'cow' or 'a cow' similarly picks out the cow-individual by virtue of cowness, and the individual may be picked out by another phrase such as 'The animal which the Hindus consider sacred', or 'the animal you saw yesterday' which does not seek any help apparently from the attribute cowness.

Although I am using a general term like 'cow' here, it should be noted that the Sanskrit philosophers, Vyāḍi and Vājapyāyana, were concerned with a sort of name-relation. Both asked the question about the word 'cow': what it is a name of? A particular (cow)? or, a universal, the property of being a cow? With suitable determiners such as use of articles, contexts, the word would be used clearly to designate or refer to a singular object, as in 'The cow stands over there'. It seems, therefore, that the issues are connected with the problem of singular reference and hence a problem that has been much discussed in modern times. It should be noted that Sanskrit does not have definite article, but there are other contextual determiners to carry the sense of definite or indefinite articles. Patañjali, in fact, shows that a general term (*jātiśabda*), without even

[9]Bhartṛhari, *Kāṇḍa* III, *Dravya Samuddeśa*, verse 3.

any explicit determiners, may designate an individual, a thing, simply from the context. He asks us to consider the following:

> Suppose in a large field, a number of cows are grazing, and a cowherd is sitting in a particular place. A person (who has lost a cow and is looking for it) approaches and asks 'Do you see here (the) cow'?[10]

Patañjali argues that a question like 'Do you see (any cow or) cows'? would be nonsensical in the context, for both of them are seeing cows, or the property, cowness. Hence the word 'cow' in the question (without even its determiner 'the') designates a particular cow, an individual, that the cowherd is asked to pick out as the possible object of his perception.

Patañjali and Kātyāyana (their dates cannot be pushed later than 200 BC) explained the views of Vājapyāyana and Vyāḍi as follows. Both presuppose an implicit principle of designation. For each object there should be a new word to designate it. '*Pratyarthan śabdaniveśaḥ*' (under PS 1.2.58). 'To each object a word is attached'. Vājapyāyana reads it as: a particular object is designated by a particular word, and therefore it follows that a different object should be designated by a different word. Now, it is argued that if by 'the designated object' here we mean a particular cow, a substance, designated by the word 'cow' then to designate another cow, a different individual, we will need another word, a different one (not just a word-token but a word-type). But since that is not what we do it must be that we designate by the word 'cow' not the individual, but, cowness, an attribute, a universal, that is present each time in the individual for us to designate. Therefore, it does not matter whether we are talking about a red cow, or a white, or a black one, we can use 'cow' to pick out the common attribute, cowness, and then through it we can reach any individual we like (cf. *Prakhyāviśeṣāt* under PS 1.2.58).

Besides, when a child learns to use the word 'cow' to designate, a particular cow is present, say, for ostension. If he has learned the word and its use properly he would certainly use it when another cow is present. Now, he must be identifying the initial attribute he first encountered so that he can successfully designate it with 'cow'. This can easily be extended even to the case of ordinary proper names. Suppose the cow the child has seen and been introduced to, is called *Śābaleya* (to be treated as a proper name although it might have been

[10]Patañjali, *Mahābhāṣya*, under *Pāṇini-sūtra* 1–2–58.

a descriptive name originally, meaning 'of many colours', compare Mill's example 'Dartmouth').[11] Next time when that cow is lying down, or running, or has grown weak or old or fat, the child will use 'Śābaleya' nonetheless. This shows, so it is argued, that through the change of time, place and stages, the cow called *Śābaleya* retains an unchanging attribute (whatever that is), the property of being *Śābaleya*, and hence whenever that *attribute* is presented, it can be designated by the word 'Śābaleya'. In this way, the 'attribute' theory of meaning is vindicated in both cases, that of such general terms as 'cow', and that of ordinary proper names as 'Śābaleya'.

Patañjali adduces two further arguments in support of the 'attribute' theory. These two arguments constituted the classic defence of the theory, and hence were repeated by many philosophers such as Dinnāga to refute the 'substance' theory.[12] Individuals or particulars are innumerable, and even if we are thinking of the same individual (in the interest of proper names), the changing states of the individual are *innumerable*. It is considered *simple* that, since we use one word 'cow' while there are innumerable cows (or states of a particular cow), past, present and future, we should assume that a single attribute common to all, is being designated by the word 'cow' or 'Śābaleya'. Otherwise, it is argued, the word's designation will never be fully comprehended! The second argument is that of 'promiscuity'. Only a particular cow is present in the 'learning situation' to be designated. When we use it to designate another particular on another occasion we ask the word to be promiscuous, so to say. If in the learning situation, we already fix the designation with a particular, how can we waver and designate by it another particular? It is, as if we first 'marry' the word with one particular and then ask it to go to another or any particular indiscriminately. The solution of this puzzle lies in accepting the 'attribute' as designatum, and not the particular which is variable. In other words, we 'marry' the word with the 'attribute' (the idea), not with the particular thing.

The 'substance' theorist counters: Only the particulars can be designated by our word-use, for otherwise most of our social communication will fail. If I ask my son to bring me a pencil by saying 'Bring me (a) pencil', he cannot certainly bring me the pencil-universal,

[11]Mill, J. S., Book I, ch. II, Sec. 5.

[12]The well-known arguments of *anantya* ('innumerableness') and *vyabhicāra* ('promiscuity'), used by Diṅnāga and many others after him are to be traced in the *Mahābhāṣya*.

or the pencil-attribute, or the pencil-idea. The use of 'pencil' in my utterance must designate a particular, a pencil-substance, in order to make any sense of the whole utterance, though not a particular pencil, but an indefinite one. Use of grammatical suffixes for number and gender in the word makes more sense when it designates particulars or substances. For the universal attribute cowness, if it exists, need be neither feminine, nor masculine, nor even neuter, and should not be more than one.

Patañjali comments that the two theories must, in fact, be combined, as they represent only the two sides of the same coin. It finally reduces to the problem of giving primacy to one or the other, to the attribute (or universal) or to the thing (the particular, or the substance):

'For him who says that the universal is designated by the word, it is not the case that the substance/particular is not designated. Or, for him who says that the substance is designated by the word, it is not the case that the universal is not designated'.[13]

5.4 NYĀYA THEORY OF REFERENCE

Patañjali's genius might have paved the way for a composite theory like the Nyāya theory of meaning which I shall now discuss. A careful formulation of the Nyāya view would share the best of both worlds. The Nyāya theory is, however, a substantialist one. It contends that words such as 'cow' designate the thing or the lump or the particular but only as distinguished by the universal or attribute cowness. The word 'pencil' designates the thing we call 'pencil', but we pick out the thing by virtue of some attribute, pencilhood (be it a real universal, an essence, discovered or discoverable, or constructed or a conceived property). Even such a proper name as 'Śābaleya' designates the lump ('piṇḍa') we call 'Śābaleya' but to pick out that 'lump' among changing states and appearances, we need the assistance of an unchanging property, unique to that individual which we must recognize when we call it by that name. Thus it is that we designate it by 'Śābaleya' even when our favourite cow has lost a leg or has grown old and thin. If we use proper names for an inanimate, apparently unchanging material object, say a hill, as the Mount Abu, this need not present any special problem as long as we believe there to be a (imagined or

[13]Patañjali, under *Paṇivisūtra*. 5.1.119.

real) unique attribute of the unchanging object, which helps us to identify the hill each time under varying perspectives, and on the basis of it, we can designate the hill each time by 'The Mount Abu'.

From what has been stated it may be surmised that each designator word (whether a singular term or a proper name) conveys with it necessarily an attribute in order to designate, for the attribute, it is believed, supplies the basis of the designation in question (cf. *pravṛttinimitta*). But I use the designator word to designate a particular, the bearer of that property or attribute in question, and not that attribute itself. If the *meaning* of a word means what it designates or reveals, then it should be the thing, and not the attribute instantiated or possessed by the thing.

The matter is complicated by two things. One is a fact of the Sanskrit language, while the other is the process of learning to use a word to convey a meaning. Good Sanskrit, as I repeatedly emphasize, like medieval Latin, does not use articles or determiners. Hence it is left ambiguous whether a term like 'cow' is being used predicatively or as a general term in Quine's sense[14] (as in 'One should not kill (a) cow'), or referentially to designate a particular (as in 'Have you seen (a) cow'? asked by me when I am looking for the cow I have lost). The first can easily be unpacked as 'For each *x* if *x* is a cow, it should not be killed', when the predicative or the attributive use of the word 'cow' will be brought to the surface. Adherents of the 'attribute' theory of meaning, however, take such cases as paradigms and then extend the theory to include the clearly referential uses as in the second case, and argue that reference to the particular here is not given by the word or its meaning directly, but by indirect implication or metaphorical extension of meaning (cf. *ākṣepa* or *lakṣaṇā*). But this way of viewing matters may be misleading at least from a purely logical point of view, for it may blur an important distinction between two uses: the predicative use and the referential use of a term. Such distinction is important to warrant valid inferences to be drawn from sentences following the rules of classical predicate logic.

The second fact concerns the situation of learning how to use a word. When a child learns a word, say 'cow' (what it means, how to use it and so on) by observing the speech and responses (i.e. the behaviour patterns = *vyavahāra*) of the adults.[15] Suppose, he learns

[14]For more on this ambiguity, see Matilal, B.K. (1971), pp. 65–70.

[15]This is the oft-discussed model situation of *saṃketa-graha* through analysis and elimination (*āvāpa* and *udvāpa*).

the meaning of the word 'cow' hearing 'Bring (the) cow' uttered in the presence of a particular cow called Śābaleya. Later on, if he is learning language for some time, he would use the word 'cow' to refer to another individual cow called Bāhuleva. He may in addition point his finger at it. Why does he do so? Obviously there should be some connection between how we learn a game (let us call it a game, a language game, *a la* Wittgenstein) and how we play it. The child here learns in the presence of Śābaleya, but plays with Bāhuleva. Is he making a mistake? Is he 'promiscuous' (in befriending one cow first and then 'playing' with another)? Adherents of the 'attribute' theory of meaning argue that he is non-promiscuous because in the learning-situation he learnt to connect the word not with the particular, with Śābaleya, but with the abstracted property, the shared attribute, cowness, and next time he sees another 'instantiation' of the same shared attribute cowness, or an essential similarity, he would use the word. He can even use the word in the presence of a wooden cow or a clay cow (cf. *mṛdgavaka*). He plays the game rightly and correctly, so goes the argument.

This seems also to be somewhat misleading for it tends to engender a confusion between a means and an end, between what means we have available to us to pick out an individual as the referent of our expression and what we pick out as the referent. The child wishes to pick out Bāhuleva. He has several means available to him to do so. He can use 'Bāhuleva' if he knows it, or 'cow' or 'animal' or 'thing' or he can simply say 'Look at that'. Each linguistic means here is backed up by some purported feature. He choose the shared attribute cowness which is present here and uses 'cow'. He is not promiscuous. For when I learn the game I can use one set of chess men (say, those made of ivory), and when I actually play the game I can use another set (those made of wood, say). The child may also use the word 'cow' to refer to this wooden toy-cow.

Here I have deliberately chosen, as examples, common names such as 'cow' used as singular terms in a context. Indian philosophers call them *jātiśabda* 'word for universal'. I have shown that their discussion implies an awareness of a distinction between the predicative use and the referential use of these words. I have also suggested that their discussion has bearing upon contemporary discussion on reference. As regards proper names, Jayanta explicitly states that some of them refer without the meditation of any attribute. I will come back to this point later.[16]

[16]Nyāya says that *saṅjñā-śabdas*, proper names, name without any *nimitta* or attribute.

5.5 DIFFERENT THEORIES OF PROPER NAME

Modern discussion about meaning and reference centres around the proper names and definite descriptions. J. S. Mill, who is often mentioned in the modern discussion, has contributed to the issue in more ways than one as I have already noted. Among other things, Mill has roughly distinguished between general names, i.e., general terms, and singular terms saying that a general term is what is capable of being truly affirmed, in the same sense, of each of an indefinite number of things, while a singular term is what is only capable of being truly affirmed, in the same sense, of one thing. Mill's examples, are 'man' and 'John'. If we take this to be a distinction similar to the *jātiśabda* and *vyaktiśabda*, we may be on the right track, although we will have to explain away or tolerate the awkwardness, of the phrase 'truly affirmed of'. For this does not clarify the distinction between the predicative use and the referential use. Perhaps Mill means that a singular name designates only one object while a general name each, severally, of any number of objects. If this is so, then it parallels the distinction between *jātiśabda* and *vyaktiśabda* in their referential uses. Mill also adds 'the word 'man' *expresses* certain qualities, and when we predicate it of those persons (John, George and Mary), we assert that they all possess those qualities'.[17]

Quine, however, interprets this dichotomy in a different way. He first takes the crucial phrase 'truly affirmed of' as meaning 'true of' (in his special sense), and then rightly complains.

> 'The distinction between general and singular terms may seem overrated . . . Why pick the number one for separate attention'?[18]

He then proceeds to redefine the distinction in terms of the contrasting roles of the two in what he calls the 'basic combination' of predication: 'Fa'. Predication, according to Quine, joins a general term 'F' and a singular term 'a' to form a sentence '*Fa*' and this sentence is true or false according as 'F' is *true or false of* (in Quine's special sense) the object, if any, to which 'a' refers. It is not clear, however, whether Mill intended the dichotomy in this way, but it does not matter. It makes one point clear that the subject term in the 'basic combination' is

[17]Mill, J. S., Book I, ch. II, Sec. 3.
[18]Quine, W. V., *Word and Object*, p. 95.

usually used to refer, and the subject term is generally a proper name or a definite description.

I have said here 'usually' having in mind not only such examples as those discussed by K. Donnellan ('Smith's murderer is insane' said when we don't know who murdered Smith),[19] but also Quine's own move to reparse all names into predicates so as to avoid some vagaries of reference in his regimented language. In fact, Quine, while being fully conscious of the referential uses of certain singular terms, recommends to parse them anew into 'indissoluble' general terms (i.e. predicates), and thereby, he argues, we can avoid a lot of tricky problems. He proposes to dissolve the problem of reference by allowing variables of quantification only to take individuals as values in his regimented language.

Strawson has said that the basic distinction of reference and predication can be understood also in terms of the distinction between what he calls the 'identification' and the 'characterization' of particular times in the world, i.e., the spatio-temporal individuals.[20] And, of course, according to him, items other than spatio-temporal particulars may also appear as identified subjects of predication. This way of viewing matters coincides with the philosophical style called doing descriptive metaphysics. Indeed, the problems raised by singular reference are problems of philosophical logic in a broader sense of the term. The Russell-Strawson controversy is too well-known to be repeated here. Even a cursory view of the controversy shows that referring expression like proper names and definite descriptions raise many extralogical questions, questions of ontology and theory of knowledge.

Let us concentrate on proper names. Here we can go back to Mill once more. The distinction Mill emphasized was that between connotative and non-connotative names. A connotative term, he defined, is one that *denotes* a 'subject' and implies an attribute and a non-connotative term is one that signifies as subject only or an attribute only.[21] The ordinary proper names are non-connotative, for they are 'unmeaning' marks that serve to distinguish the objects like the robber's chalk mark on Alibaba's house in the well-known story of the *Arabian Nights*. This formulation, with all its vagueness (and,

[19]Donnellan, K., p. 47.

[20]Strawson, P. F. (ed.), *Philosophical Logic*, pp. 6–7.

[21]Mill, J. S., Book I, ch. II, Section 5.

perhaps, because of it), seems to be coming close to the one Indian view mentioned by Naiyāyikas such as Jayanta. Even the word 'subject' which, according to Mill, is the owner of the attribute connoted by the term, seems to match well with the term *'tadvat'* ('owner of that') in the Nyāya theory.[22]

Proper names, for Mill, are attached or 'tagged' to the objects themselves. Once they are so attached, they would continue to name the object independently of any other consideration for any attribute that the object may or may not have. Proper names, therefore, if properly understood, would be understood as 'unmeaning' marks. The meaning, according to Mill, resides not in what they *denote* but in what they *connote* (p. 28). Mill, here, is talking about only such proper names as John or Tom, and not of singular or definite descriptions. Jayanta has talked about a view of such proper names as 'Ḍittha' where he says that such names are designators of objects, persons (as this case may be) without the introduction of any possible attributes of the objects. This was set against the view which says that the proper names in order to designate make use of at least some trivial attributes such as Ḍitthaness for Ḍittha. According to one philosophical conviction (close to phenomenalism), Ḍitthaness may be a trivial, but not an unreal attribute, for it is the universal attribute supposed to be shared commonly by the everchanging states of Ḍittha through passage of time or the object seen under different perspectives. But this is arguable:

'No one apprehends a property called Ḍitthaness, as we do with regard to skyness. And thee is no ground for the wise to imagine it'.[23]

The word 'sky' ('the sky') is a singular term and therefore it is like 'Ḍittha'. But skyness or the essential attribute of the sky may be accepted as the basis for designating the sky by the word 'sky'. This is, however, not acceptable in the case of Ḍittha. This view, therefore, may be considered as upholding a theory of proper names similar to that of Mill's in that it says that these proper names designate things by way of being 'unmeaning' marks, for there is no attribute, shared or unshared, in the designata, attribute which they can 'connote' or 'signify'. Mill also distinguished, as Jayanta did, between connotative proper names as 'the sun' (or 'God') and the non-connotative ones.

[22]The *'tad-vat'* view of reference has been refuted by Diṅnāga and others alongside the Universalist view of reference. It seems that Nyāya held a modified 'tad-vat' view of reference (cf. *jāti-viśiṣṭa-vyakti-vāda*). Jayanta, p. 295: *tad-vān eva padārthaḥ*.

[23]Jayanta, p. 298. Jayanta calls proper names *'dravyaśabda'*.

It is, however, not clear how a name like 'Ḍittha' (or the name user) picks out the individual that it (or, he) does. The modern development in the theory of proper names has been twofold. One is that of Frege-Russell-Strawson which roughly argues that proper names are meaningful either in the sense of being disguised definite descriptions or having a sense (in Frege's sense) which determines the reference. The other is that of Kripke and Putnam, according to which, proper names are rigid designators of things, and their meaning is not given by descriptions or clusters of them, which the designatum may happen to satisfy uniquely. The first is called generally the 'description' theory of naming while the second may be called, I suggest, the 'baptism' theory of naming. It may be noted that under the 'description' theory, one cannot ascribe in a statement singular existence to an object referred to by a name (say 'Pegasus'), for such a statement in this theory should be read as one which says whether certain description or property ('Pegasizs') is satisfied by some unspecified *x*. The 'baptism' theory, it seems to me, avoids this problem since it depends on the notion of an initial baptism where the object is named either by ostension or via some description but such description is introduced only to fix the reference and hence not synonymous, as the 'description' theorist may believe, with the name. Ostension or the situation of fixing the reference, may ensure the reality or fictional nature of the referent so that the problem of singular attribution of existence will be either forestalled or patently contradictory. But this is a tentative comment, for Kripke did not elaborate upon this point in his 1970 lectures.[24]

5.6 RIGID DESIGNATION *vs* NYĀYA 'INHERENCE'

Kripke's theory of naming (proper names and some so-called general terms, i.e., natural kinds and mass terms are rigid designators) has consequences for various other knotty problems of philosophy, the problem of necessity, a priori knowledge in epistemology, mind-body

[24]Kripke, S., *Naming and Necessity*, p. 311. Kripke says: 'Fiction presents no problem for *any* point of view. Let a theory be given, such that no names can fail to denote (as in Russell, with name =logically proper name). Then it will be part of the pretence of the fiction that the narrator stands in the correct relation to a definite object, and that the appropriate conditions for naming have been met. It does not matter here what the "appropriate conditions" are—they can be Kripke's history that begins with a baptism, or it can be Russell's acquaintance'.

problem in the philosophy of mind etc. But here we are concerned with only one aspect of the theory. A name like 'Nixon' is a rigid designator; its meaning is not given by, nor is it synonymous with, a description or cluster of descriptions, e.g., 'The President of the U.S., who resigned before his second term in office was over', although the description may pick out the same man as 'Nixon'. A description may be used to fix the reference of a name (mostly for people not present at the baptism ceremony), but does not give its meaning. Even natural kind terms such as 'gold' or 'tiger' are said to be rigid designators, for we use such a term to designate a species. They do not mark out a 'cluster-concept' (as is usually thought when we look at a dictionary definition) in which most of the properties used to identify the kind must be satisfied. In fact, these properties, according to Kripke's theory are neither necessary nor sufficient condition for membership in the kind. In sum, therefore, names in this theory, do not get their reference through some uniquely identifying marks, as was commonly believed.

Since the 'rigid designator' theory heavily exploits the concept of a baptismal ceremony, let us imagine such a situation. What happens? An object is present: a man or a thing or a rabbit (say), identifiable, and properly distinguishable from the environment or background, by ostension or perception or both. And somebody (the name-giver or God) says, 'See that'? And suppose successful communication has taken place, and I, who would use the name and pass it on to friends and future generations, understand what 'that' (the so-called truly proper name, in Russell's sense) refers to. Then the name-giver continues (maybe with some incantations or other suitable rituals), 'I baptise *that* as *A* (for 'Aristotle')'. What happens then? The object is rigidly 'glued' so to say with the name 'A'. They are inseparable, at least in a sense. In any possible world, if that object exists, it has that name, A. Of course, if such a baptism did not take place, the object would not have been called Aristotle (Kripke, p. 270). We have to allow further that there may be other objects named in identical fashion, by the same name. But as long as that object may exist in any possible world, or in any counter-factual situation, it must bear the name A. In other words, the object cannot exist without bearing that name. This name-relation seems to me very similar to the relation of inherence (*samavāya*) of the Naiyāyikas.

Nyāya conceives of the inherence relation (illustrations: part-whole, substance-attribute, and particular-universal) as inseparable

only in the sense that one of the relata cannot exist without the other.[25] More to the point would be to choose the inherence relation illustrated in the relation between the real universal, catness, and its instances, particular cats. It is argued that if a cat exists anywhere (even in any possible world) it must have catness (glued to it like the rigid designator), although it is believed by Nyāya that if all the cats are destroyed by a freak or an accident, catness will continue to be (perhaps 'hanging in the air'). Initially, it is argued, as soon as a cat is born (or something is born, which is destined to be called a cat) catness clings to it at that very moment automatically, or naturally (or shall we say by a Heavenly decree).

It may be noted that natural kind terms and mass terms are treated in the same way in the new theory of reference. Therefore, terms like 'gold', 'water', 'tiger', and 'cat' are also treated as rigid designators. Putnam thinks that we 'baptise' what we take to be 'paradigms' ('uncontroversial examples'?) of some substance such as water and then use 'water' to refer to whatever has the same nature as the paradigms.[26] We may not need to *know* the nature of the stuff or the thing we are naming at the time of 'baptism'. (Empirical science may help us to discover the nature of the stuff sometime in future, if we are lucky). But we must have, I think, some pretty good idea of the stuff to recognize the paradigm and what it is a paradigm of: in any case, once this term is introduced, it can be handed down from person to person in the referential chain, maintaining its original reference at each link.

I am not sure whether the picture given above correctly represents the new theory of reference. But it seems to be correct in essential respects. My reference to Nyāya inherence and universal is not simply accidental in the context. Nyāya universals are mostly universals belonging to natural kinds. They are regarded as something like real essences of natural kinds. Therefore, the word 'cat' is glued, according to Nyāya, to a particular cat-thing, a lump (= *pinda*), by a kind of baptismal ceremony, (which I shall describe presently). But this baptism is done according to Nyāya, on the basis of the *glue* itself, as it were, which is to say that *catness* or cat-essence, or some underlying nature of all and only cat-things, the nature that is recognized or recognizable (though not always specifiable), is the causal ground

[25]Praśastapāda's characterisation of this relation as *ayutasiddha* has been explained in this manner by different commentators.

[26]Putnam, H. (ed. S. P. Schwartz), pp. 113–18.

(*nimitta*) for designating something as 'cat'. It is said that the word 'cat' is causally connected with some nature, say *x* or catness, at the initial ceremony, and then it designates (rigidly, I venture to add) whatever has *x*, i.e. catness. Improvising a bit, I have said that it is the catness or cat-essence that glues, according to Nyāya, the name 'cat' with the lump, cat. And therefore, in any possible world, if there is a lump containing catness, it will be designated by 'cat'. The same underlying nature of gold, which the unscientific Indians called 'goldness' and modern science calls 'atomic number 79' serves to distinguish between gold and the fool's gold (as in Kripke's example).

The situation does not vary much in the case of proper names. When a child is 'baptised' as Devadatta or Aristotle, the name becomes the designator of the person under all circumstances. Of course, one cannot *ordinarily* think of a universal here acting as the glue between the name and the object. Naiyāyikas, however, do sometimes think so.[27] It is argued that there is an underlying essence, a universal called Devadattaness, behind the ever-changing body of Devadatta (in fact, it is argued that the body changes at every moment and if it is believed that the personal name refers to the body of the person, Devadatta must then be a class name. If the personal name is said to denote the person, it can still be argued that my 'person' is changing, always having experiences etc.). Thus, we can imagine an unchanging universal essence, Aristotleness, shared by the child Aristotle, Aristotle the young man, and Aristotle the adult. And the name 'Aristotle' is glued by such Aristotle-essence to the Aristotle-lump. Of course, the claim that Aristotleness is a universal has been disputed. Jayanta points out that we do not need a universal each time for naming.

In the case of proper names, i.e. names which are properly arbitrary, Nyāya says that we have to think of unique properties rather than universals. Naming is done by a stipulation of the name-giver, no doubt, but once it is done, the name *glues* in to the individual not through any universal property like catness or elephanthood but a unique property of that particular (the toy-elephant, say, which the child names one fine morning as *Ḍittha*). What would be a unique property, we may ask. But it is not necessary for us to be able to

[27] Personal names are not treated as proper names, but as generic names in Nyāya, for although they are admitted to be arbitrarily given to the persons, it is possible to talk about a universal, unchanging property like *Devadatta-ness* underlying the changing body-stages of the person called Devadatta. Thus, an arbitrary name, once the naming ceremony is over, can turn into a generic name or *jāti-śabda*.

articulate it much as we cannot articulate (if we are not scientists) what constitutes *goldness* of gold. We may conceive of the Ḍitthaness of Ḍittha as a set of unique aspects of the object, or even a unique set of properties, a set that is not to be found or formulable, in respect of anything other than Ḍittha.

It has been suggested by some Naiyāyikas that the unique property of an individual is nothing else but 'identity with that individual itself' (cf. Jagadīśā: *tad-vyaktitvaṃ ca tādātmyena saiva vyaktiḥ*). If this means that the unique set I have talked about in the preceding paragraph is identical with the unique individual I have named Ḍittha, then it is not a very uncommon move in philosophy. But this move invites the following obvious problem.

Sanskrit Grammar says (at least this is the Nyāya interpretation of Kātyāyana's Vārttika under *Pāṇinisūtra* 5.1.119)[28] that if we add suffix 'ness' (*—tva*) to nominal stems or names, we get a new term with a different meaning, i.e., a term designating a *guṇa*, a property, locatable in the object designated by the original name. Thus,

'A cat—catness' or 'water—waterness'

But now we are being told in effect:

'Aristotleness = Aristotle'
'Ḍitthaness = Ḍittha'

Such anomalies are to be tolerated, perhaps, in the interest of philosophy. We may refer back to the identity puzzle of Frege, and note that there is obviously a cognitive difference between

'Ḍittha = Ḍittha' and 'Ḍitthaness = Ḍittha'.

One is a tautology while the other is a philosophical thesis. Notice that 'Aristotleness' may not include any of the properties that the 'description' theorist may think to constitute the *meaning* of the name 'Aristotle'. It does not matter, for example, whether Aristotle even went to pedagogy or played tennis for the rest of his life! In some sense, we can say, however, that Aristotle (the great Greek philosopher) would not have been Aristotle, if he did not do all or most of the things he did in his life. And this may have been initially the intuitive basis of the so-called 'description' theory of proper names. But there is

[28]Matilal (1971), p. 101.

obviously another sense in which it would be impossible or improper to say strictly that Aristotle would not have been Aristotle. Iago said to *Othello*: 'I am not what I am' (Act. I, Sc. I, 65).[29] Obviously what he said was not a nonsense, for he did not negate a *true tautology*. In fact, Iago seems to have been aware, unconsciously as it were, of the rigid designation theory, for he said a few moments earlier:

'It is as sure as you are Roderigo,
Were I the Moore, I would not be Iago:' (56–57)

It is, it seems to me, a stricter, different sense that the rigid designation theory is after; it is that sense in which it would be absolutely nonsensical to say that Aristotle would not have been Aristotle. This special sense is brought to focus in connection with such proper names as 'Ḍittha' for a toy-elephant. For once it is 'baptised' by the child, it can just lie in the corner of the room, or in the attic, for the rest of its life, it will still not lose its Ḍitthaness. For unlike Aristotle, Ḍittha does not have to do anything to make us believe that it is not losing its Ḍitthaness.

5.7 NYĀYA 'BAPTISMAL' CEREMONY

What is the picture of a Nyāya 'baptismal ceremony'? In order to fight a different sort of battle against the grammarians and Mīmāṃsakas, Nyāya speaks of a 'baptism' i.e., a 'name-giving ceremony' conducted by God. The opposite view is that the word–object relationship is eternal, in the sense of being uncreated, natural, and transcendental. Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika argues that it is conventional and hence created by a *will* in a name-giving ceremony. Such a ceremony apparently takes place at the beginning of each cycle or creation where God says, assuming the position of a knowledgeable adult (= *uttama-vṛddha*), to man, 'From such-and-such word such-and-such object should be understood.' In other words, convention takes the form of an act of will of God as 'I wish that you designate the cow-lump by the word "cow"'. Once this is done, all natural kind words get their reference fixed, and it is passed on from person to person, generation to

[29]A similar statement of apparent tautology in Bhavabhūti's *Uttararāmacarita*: *'Rāmo'smi sarvaṃ sahe'*. The argument seems to be a tautology like this: I endure everything because I am Rāma (for Rāma endures everything). But obviously, this is not intended as a tautology, for otherwise the rhetoric would be lost.

generation, in the referential chain, maintaining its original reference at each link.

How about proper names such as 'Aristotle'? Naturally, it is Aristotle's parent or some such person, who 'baptised' Aristotle. Nyāya argues that here too God's will is a decisive factor. For it is pointed out that there is a scriptural injunction which enjoins that the father should, on the eleventh day of the birth, name the child. The father in naming the child is only carrying out the order or the decree of God.[30] Therefore Aristotle's 'baptism' should not present a problem, although he was a pagan, neither a Hindu nor a Christian! In any case, the name-giver, in carrying out the will of God, tags, in the way I have described, the name to the object. How about some modern names, which do not require ritualistic name-giving ceremony? Nyāya answers that with regards to such names and words, the first user, by his act of will, performs the minimal name-giving ceremony either explicitly or implicitly. In fact, some Naiyāyikas argue that the same situation may be true in all cases of names, proper names or natural kind names. It is the will of the name-giver, and God or God's will may not intervene in it at all. The only thing that is needed, according to some modern Naiyāyikas, is that the name-giver must have the will or intention and the *authority* to give that name. In fact any man can act like Humpty Dumpty and take the authority upon himself, provided there is no Alice there to object to it. Who does give the name 'God'? Mill said that 'God' is a proper name for the monotheists. 'God' or 'Brahman' is a proper name for the Hindu intellectual too. Mill, however, argued that these names were not, strictly speaking, individual names, but general names. For 'The majority of mankind have believed, and still believe, that there are many gods . . .' But I think this is wrong. For, at least, for a monist Vedāntin, 'Brahman' is the *name* of the Ultimate Reality, and under no conceivable circumstances, can we talk about many such ultimate realities, unless we are talking metaphorically. However, I leave this question open for the present discussion.

[30]The tentative scriptural passage that is usually quoted by the Sanskrit philosophers is: *ekādaśehani pitā nāma kuryāt.*

CHAPTER SIX

Word and Object—II

6.1 NOMINALISM OF HOBBES AND DIṄNĀGA

Apart from the general implication that a theory of meaning has for one's philosophy of religion, I think the Buddhist theory of meaning or *apoha* has a special significance for the philosophy of Buddhist religion. One recurrent theme in different forms of Buddhism has been that the *pure* reality lies, strictly speaking, beyond the domain of words, or language. The word–object relationship is, in Buddhism, only conventional, no doubt. But since word can be related only with the non-particular, its connection with the particular must be indirect, in fact, a negative link called *apoha* or 'exclusion'. Words do not *tell* us what the thing is, but give us a pretty good indication about what it is not and this indirect indication is enough for making communication through language successful.

The view was propounded by Diṅnāga, who held sort of a phenomenalistic-nominalistic position. One seriously entertained consequence of this position is that there cannot be any proper name in true sense of the term, where the meaning and reference completely coincide. Words are like nets that catch fish all right but along with it some other items that are not fish. They do not hit the bull's eye directly, nor do they miss the mark completely.

Another indirect consequence of this theory of meaning is the thesis upheld by most religious/mystical philosophers of India: The ultimate reality cannot be directly spoken about but only indirectly indicated through negation.

The nominalistic thesis of Hobbes has been stated in the following passage of *Leviathan*:

'Of names, some are "proper" and singular to one only thing, as

"Peter", "John", "this man", "this tree"; and some are "common" to many things, "man", "horse", "tree"—every of which, though but one name, is nevertheless the name of diverse particular things, in respect of all which together it is called a "universal", there being nothing in the world universal but names; for things named are everyone of them individual and singular.'[1]

If the nominalist says that words are the only universals that exist, Diṅnāga and his Buddhist followers would readily agree. For Diṅnāga a universal or a general concept, the supposed *meaning* of a general name like 'tree' is only a linguistic construct. It can also be called a thought construct, for we will see presently that, according to Diṅnāga, there exist no essential difference between a linguistic construct and a thought-construct.

The two philosophers, Diṅnāga and Hobbes, were almost a world apart in their philosophic convictions. I think it is because of this difference their occasional agreement, strange it may seem sometimes, becomes philosophically illuminating. In *Computatio Sive Logica*,[2] for example, Hobbes propounded a much criticized theory of proposition,—a theory that both Abelard and Ockham (according to Kneale) supported in their own way: 'in every proposition what is signified is the belief of the speaker that the predicate is the name of the same thing of which the subject is a name'. According to Kneale and the most official doctrine of modern logicians, this was a confusion between the two contrasting roles, the referential role of the proper name and the descriptive or characteristic role of the predicate in a basic proposition. Mill,[3] while mounting his severe attack on Hobbes on this point, conceded that this theory works with only such proposition that consists of two proper names joined by the 'is' of identity. According to Mill, Hobbes confused general terms with singular terms of proper names and did not realize that general terms (names), unlike singular terms, do not simply denote but also have connotation. It seems to me, 'Hobbes' theory of names along with his nominalism was formulated (though somewhat 'sloppily') in order precisely to avoid the talk of *connotation* of general terms, Diṅnāga proposed a similar analysis of proposition, although it was differently formulated and defended by his theory of *apoha*.

[1]Hobbes, p. 15.
[2]Kneale, W., p. 372.
[3]Mill, J. S., Book I, Ch. II, Sec. 1.

6.2 PHENOMENALISTIC BASIS OF NOMINALISM

Diṅnāga's nominalism was tied to a sort of phenomenalism, according to which the world of reals coincides with the world of exclusive particular that are revealed only in our prelinguistic and pre-conceptual sensory experience. Among modern philosophers, N. Goodman seems to be most sympathetic to nominalism. Quine is so only to some extent. Goodman's main contribution lies in developing a language that is most suitable for phenomenalism and nominalism, a language that would not countenance any non-individuals or non-particulars.[4] It was probably Hobbes' mistake (if it was *his* mistake at all) to think that our talk of, or reference to, connotations, concepts or non-individuals can be avoided if we interpret all general names as proper names which would be like unmeaning chalk-marks on things (to use Mill's expression).[5] If this were possible then with a little ingenuity we can imagine a language that will consist presumably of two major varieties of sentences, expressing respectively identity and difference (non-identity) between things. But it is not really essential (as, I think, we are now aware of) for nominalism to resort to this device. One can easily adopt the powerful, but natural tool of the predicate logic, as Goodman and Quine have shown, and maintain, at the same time, a nominalistic position as long as one does not countenance non-individuals as values of variables. In fact, there is reverse suggestion in this language—instead of treating general names as proper names, we may treat proper names as general names, i.e., predicates, which are true of, applicable to, one or many individuals. This type of re-structuring of the logical language would not have been possible, perhaps, without the modern (Fregean) notion of predicates (as explained by Dummett). But this is another matter. The role of reference in modern predicate calculus is transferred to the variables of quantification. Thus, Goodman says that 'Hume is a philosopher' can be interpreted or translated as 'Something is called Hume and he is a philosopher'.[6] Surprisingly, here both the grammatical subject and the predicate terms are interpreted as predicates ('. . . is called Hume' and '. . . is a philosopher') being jointly true of, or applicable to, the same individuals. And Hobbes' insight

[4]Goodman, N., pp. 33–41.

[5]Mill, Ibid., Sec. 5. Hobbes used the notion of multiple denotation which was not very far removed from the 'satisfaction' relation of predicate logic.

[6]Goodman, N., p. 35.

was not very far from this. Diṅnāga, as we will see, argues that both the terms in 'The lotus (is) blue' are (in a special sense) denotative of the same particular because they agree in excluding the same class, that of non-blue non-lotus. This class of *non-blue non-lotus*, let us note, is not equivalent to that of *neither blue nor lotus*, but to that of *not (blue-lotus)*. The class is conceived in such a way that everything except a blue lotus, for example, even a blue horse or a white lotus, would belong to it. The following diagrams will specify the class we are talking about. The two intersecting circles represent the two classes: blue things and lotuses. The rectangle which contains both the circles is the universe of discourse. The class of non-blue non-lotus is identified by the shaded area of Diagram 3. (Note that Diagram 1 represents the class of non-blue by its shaded area, and 2 the class of non-lotus).

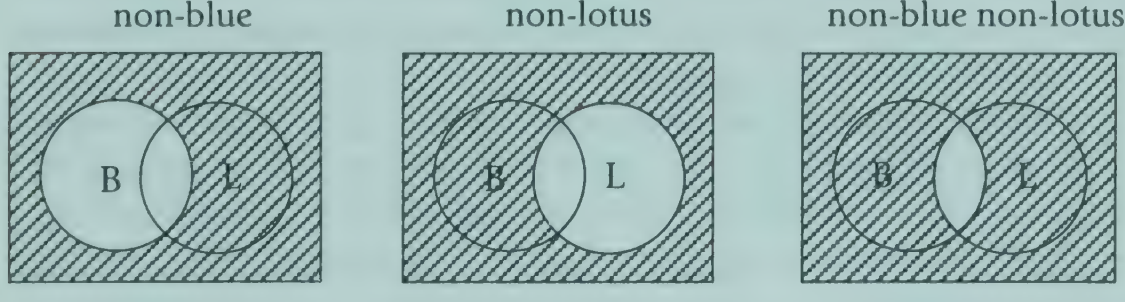


Diagram 1 Diagram 2 Diagram 3

The oddity or quaintness of talking in terms of the negative, i.e. the complement classes will be explained later on.[7]

6.3 DIṄNĀGA AND CONCEPTUALISM

Diṅnāga was not a conceptualist. Although most of the time Diṅnāga's argument would be given in terms of what we call today concepts—he opposed the Nyāya realism and the Nyāya doctrine of essence or universal by propounding an extreme position, according to which what exists or *really* exist are evanescent property-particulars. These are called *svalakṣaṇas*, unique data that are *given*. He also allowed that generalities or non-individuals can be called 'objects' (*viṣaya*), but they are *objects* of thought and language. In order to understand this point,

[7]This is, I think, Diṅnāga's main contribution in support of a nominalistic position. Roughly, meanings are universal and; universals are imaginative constructs and imaginative constructs are to be explained away as negation or in term of complement classes and exclusions.

one needs to understand the interrelation of language and thought according to this view. In this respect Diṅnāga shared the general view propounded by other such Indian philosophers as Bhartṛhari.[8] The view is roughly that there cannot be any thought without language or speech, and vice versa. In fact, it is believed that language and thought interpenetrate each other deeply and essentially so that the two levels, language and thought can hardly be kept apart in a serious discussion. There are many intuitive arguments that can be gleaned from the writings of many philosophers in support of this point. And, of course, there are arguments to the contrary. One can refer to the saying that 'thinking is the soul's dialogue with itself'. On the contrary, one can argue that sometimes we do have the experience that we have thoughts which we cannot articulate in speech. But these points are outside the scope of our discussion. The point is, however, that it is not possible to have concepts (the way we understand concepts) without language.

The interdependence of language and thought, according to both Bhartṛhari and Diṅnāga, is a true interdependence. This means that we cannot give priority to one or the other in our discussion.[9] They are like two sticks leaning and supporting each other. Their common job is imaginative construction (*vikalpa*), that is, in essence, imagination[10] in the form of concept-application and object-identification through a name. It is (and this part of thesis is controversial) a fabrication of reality performing a self-fulfilling purpose. Language-words objectify for the sake of supplying their own referents or meanings. It seems to me that while many today may agree with the 'interdependence' thesis, notably Davidson,[11] they would balk at the second part and there they may part company.

The notion of imaginative construction was probably first articulated in the Indian tradition in the *Yogasūtra*, where at least two of its characteristics are mentioned; that imaginative construction is

[8]In fact, Diṅnāga's *apoha* theory of meaning was greatly influenced by some insightful comments of Bhartṛhari about the nature of language and meaning. See the verse of *Vākyapadīya*, Kāṇḍa III, *Vṛttisamuddeśa*, Verse 8, quoted by Diṅnāga in the *apoha* section.

[9]This seems to be the implication of the famous epigram ascribed to Diṅnāga: '*vikalpayonayaḥ śabdaḥ vikalpaḥ śabdayonayaḥ*'. 'Language is created out of thought, (and) thought out of language'.

[10]Strawson, P. F. (1974), pp. 59–65.

[11]Davidson, D., pp. 7–8.

essentially dependent upon speech or language and that it lacks any reference to reality.[12] Imaginative construction is distinguished from reality on the one hand and from unreality on the other. That is why it is described as a fabrication of reality or, let us say, a second order reality, or if we are ungenerous we may call it a pseudo-reality. This is to be distinguished from reality as such, i.e., what is usually called the ultimate reality—reality, which is revealed in our correct, unvarnished perceptual experience. Imaginative construction is also to be distinguished from the 'pure' unreality, which appears in our errors, illusions, dreams etc. Illusions and dreams create objects of their own, and these objects are essentially private. They do not admit the test of intersubjectivity. But Language is a social art. And through language, we participate in a common fiction, a convenient myth. We create a picture of reality by imposing on it a structure that, according to both Bhartṛhari and Diṅnāga, does not belong there, but it is still claimed that this picture is not shattered to pieces even when the reality is properly understood. As Frege was insistent on distinguishing his realm of *Sinn* from the mental, private images, his 'thought' from psychological judgements,[13] these philosophers too insisted upon the distinction between pure illusions or private image, and the 'conceptual' reality by an appeal to intersubjectivity, and common consent. For the sake of convenience, we might call the objects or elements of this world of make-believe, *posits* or *concepts*. But these 'concepts' are not those of the conceptualists, or those of the British empiricists. For concepts in the British empiricist tradition are usually interpreted as *ideas* in mind. But the 'concepts' of Bhartṛhari and Diṅnāga owe their origin and existence to words alone which constitute the other side of the coin in Buddhism that we have called thought-construction or *vikalpa*. Hence, what we are dealing with here is not conceptualism but nominalism. I will come back to the point.

As regards the status of concepts (as elements in what we have called here imaginative construction), it may be worthwhile to quote a particular comment of Quine as regards 'posits and truth':

'Everything to which we concede existence is a posit from the standpoint of a description of the theory-building process, and simultaneously real from

[12]Patañjali: *Yogosūtra*, I, 9.
[13]Frege, G. (1956), p. 35–38.

the standpoint of the theory that is being built. Nor let us look down on the standpoint of the theory as make-believe; for we can never do better than occupy the standpoint of some theory or other, the best we can muster at the time'.[14]

6.4 DIṄNĀGA'S APOHA-NOMINALISM

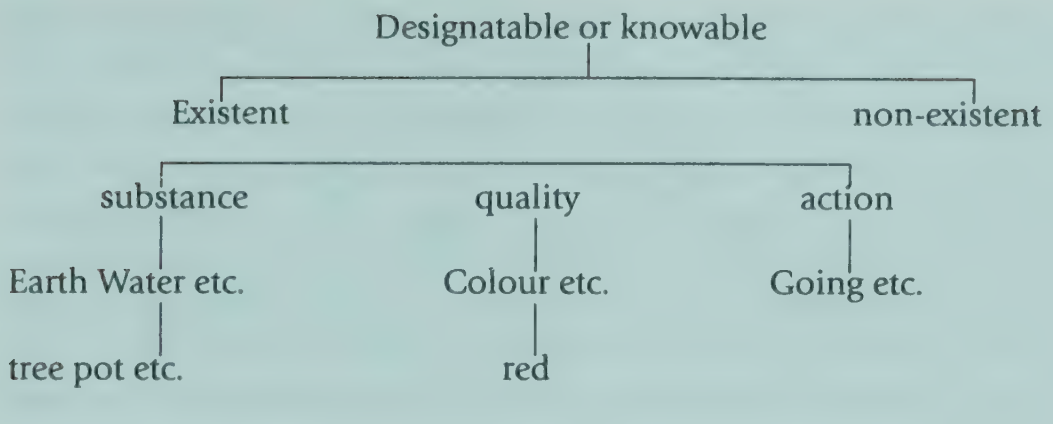
The 'concepts' of these Indian philosophers share this double feature—they are real from the standpoint of the language and construction, and posits from the standpoint of the description of the process of language and construction.

Diṅnāga presupposes a hierarchy of words or concepts. In fact he adopts without much modification the hierarchy of categories and subcategories of the Vaiśeṣika system, and assumes that this gives approximately a correct picture of what common language and thought cooperate together to construct. It is not quite clear whether Diṅnāga maintained seriously that general names and universals are indistinguishable and hence identical. I shall present the hierarchy first, by an inverted tree diagram, as it was originally conceived, and then to facilitate discussion use a formal representation of this hierarchy. (This will also show that according to Diṅnāga there is a basic agreement in our act of inferring and act of conveying a meaning by a word).

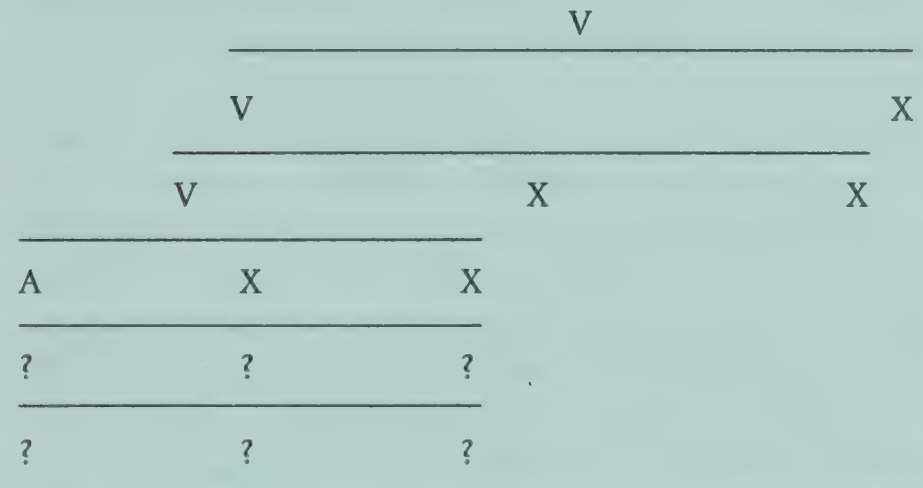
Let 'A' be our starting point. 'A' can stand for either a *linga* 'evidence' or a *śabda* 'word/concept', according to Diṅnāga. The points marked by 'V' could be *entailed by* such a *linga* or *śabda*, those marked by 'X' would be *excluded* (vyāvṛtta) by it, and those marked by '?' would entail it but never be entailed by it. Given A, we will have an indecision with regard to those marked by '?'. Diṅnāga is supposed to have claimed that no matter whether A is an *evidence* (i.e,, a reason in an inference) such as *śiṃśapā* or a word/concept 'lotus', it will have the same logical powers. It will exclude the X's and entail any of the V's, but it will not entail any ?'s.

Here, again, one is reminded of some comments made by Hobbes. Hobbes once contended that we cannot gain any knowledge through inference unless we use words either implicitly or explicitly. Universal names are 'imposed' on a number of things not because of any universal or connotation, but for their 'similitude' in some way or

[14]Quine, W. V. (1960), p. 22.



Let us consider the following:



(Here, V *vyāpaka*, the pervader. A *linga* or *śabda*.
X *vipakṣa*, those excluded. ? *vyāpya* and hence dubious

other. Hobbes also argued that universal names are arranged in some hierarchy:[15]

'And of names universal, some are of more, and some of less extent, the larger comprehending the less large, and some again of equal extent, comprehending each other reciprocally. As for example, the name 'body' is of larger signification than the word 'man' and comprehendeth it; and the names 'man' and 'rational' are of equal extent—comprehending mutually one another'. (*Leviathan*)

[15]Hobbes, p. 15.

Diṅnāga, following the Vaiśeṣika hierarchy, argued that the meaning of the word 'colour' is included in or pervaded by, the meaning of the word 'quality', while it pervades in its turn or includes the meaning of 'blue' or 'red'. And co-extensive terms '*vṛkṣa*' and '*taru*' (both stand for trees), according to Diṅnāga, will mutually pervade, i.e. 'imply' each other. Of course, in Diṅnāga's language, we have to say that they cannot exclude each other and they both exclude the same class, the class of non-trees. Let me explain further.

Suppose we use the word 'tree' presumably to denote, or to capture, an individual, a particular. According to this theory the use of any word immediately divides the world of concepts into two: those that are excluded and those that are not. There is a further division in the non-excluded group: those that are implied by it, usually the higher concepts or co-extensive concepts, and those that imply it, the lower concepts. The excluded group is actually a set of contrary possibilities (open-ended) that is not reachable either by upward journey to the apex or by downward journey from the nodal point occupied by the word 'tree'. This is an open-ended set, for the picture of our inverted tree-diagram is not completely representable. But our calling something 'tree' or our saying '(it is a) tree' does not attribute any property, say, that of being a tree, for there is no such property to be attributed. Words do not denote the objects nor do they give any positive characterization of them, but they only capture the objects via a negative characterization. 'Tree'—the word merely functions to exclude an indefinite number of positive characterizations or concepts. For example when we have applied the word 'tree' to a particular, we know that, if it is a true application of the word 'tree', the same individual/particular cannot be at the same time truly describable as 'a man' or 'a bird' or 'a worm'. In fact application of the word 'tree' is illuminating only in this way, i.e., it excludes a number of other words, or disjunctive set of words/concepts. This follows from the logical relation between what we call concepts, i.e., the interrelation of concepts exemplified by the hierarchy diagram. Diṅnāga says that this is the only *meaning* that we can attach to the word 'tree', viz. 'exclusion of *non-tree* possibilities' where '*non-tree* possibilities' is only a blanket expression for a disjunctive set of the kind described already.

Let us now discuss a compound expression '(The) blue lotus' as applied to a particular, or the sentence 'The lotus is blue' to describe a fact. According to Diṅnāga, here, both terms 'blue' and 'lotus' are used predicatively with regard to the same particular. In fact,

'Something is blue and it is also a lotus' would be a good expansion of the same expression.[16] Diṅnāga says that even concurrence of the two words in Sanskrit regarding their taking the same suffix shows that they are intended to be capturing the same object. What happens? The word/concept 'blue', as before, excludes a disjunctive set (which we may call *non-blue* possibilities) and similarly the word/concept 'lotus' excludes the set of non-lotus possibilities. So finally what happens is that the joint expression excludes a bigger set, *non-blue non-lotus* possibilities. We have narrowed down our net in an attempt to capture the particular. And if we use, for example, '(A) big blue fresh lotus' we have narrowed down out net further for we have excluded a much bigger set.

In all these cases, I am using an indefinite article to maintain the force of Diṅnāga's argument. Since Sanskrit never uses a definite article corresponding to 'the' in English, it is difficult to know what would be Diṅnāga's explanation of definite description. There are, however, demonstratives in Sanskrit, which are sometimes used as a proxy for the definite article. I shall come back to the problem of 'this' and 'that'.

6.5 VERBAL JUDGEMENT AND INFERENCE

The above hierarchy diagram or some variation of it can be used to settle some points about inference according to Diṅnāga. What is the basic form of an inference? From *A*, I infer *B*. *A* is called the inferential mark or evidence and *B* is the inferable. Diṅnāga says here again *'A' and* 'B' stand for nothing but word/concepts (i.e. just words). Now inferential passage from *A* to *B* is justified only in either of the two situations. (1) *A* and *B* are two distinct words/concepts but they have the same excluding *force*, i.e. one excludes a disjunctive set that happens to coincide with the set excluded by the other. This happens when both *A* and *B* have, to use modern terminology, the same

[16]Here, it must be noted that Sanskrit expression *'nīlaṃ utpalam'* is, by itself, ambiguous, for it can either be translated as a sentence 'The lotus is blue' or as a phrase or word-complex '(The or a) blue lotus'. The analysis suggested here is, it seems to me, applicable to either case. For, following a Fregean intuition, if we take the 'assertion' element out of the above sentence, it is reduced to a complex of terms. Alternatively, we can add an assertion element to the phrase and then consider the two sentences 'There is a blue louts' and 'A lotus is blue' as equivalent. See, in this connection, Matilal (1971), pp. 91–96, and Matilal (1968), p. 13.

extension, although they are *intensionally* distinguishable. (2) *B* is higher than *A* in the hierarchy, i.e., one meets *B* only in one's upward journey to the apex from *A*. This means that the set excluded by *A* is bigger than that by *B*. In modern terminology, *A*'s extension is a subset of *B*'s extension.

Let us cite concrete examples. If the expression 'a product' is applicable to a particular then we can infer that 'destructible' is also applicable to it. Consider '*x* is a product

Ergo, *x* is destructible'.

Here the set of non-products coincides with the set of non-destructible. Therefore the two words/concepts are, although intensionally distinguishable, extensionally equivalent.

We may also infer that the word/concept 'an animal' is applicable to a particular, if the word/concept 'a dog' is applicable. In other words,

'*x* is a dog, *ergo*, *x* is an animal'.

Here the word/concept 'dog' excludes a set bigger than that which the word/concept 'animal' excludes. A word is correctly applied to a particular only if none of the excluded word/concept is applicable to it, and similarly an inferential mark or evidence is a correct mark of another concept if and only if none of the words/concepts excluded by the mark is applicable to the particular to which the other concept is supposed to apply.

6.6 NAMES RESOLVED INTO DESCRIPTIONS

I have spoken earlier of the gradual narrowing down of the net of naming act to capture the intended particulars. But this seems to be a never ending process, unless we use, in the absence of a definite article, some demonstratives or some proper name. In other words, we were talking about only general terms and their combinations. For Diṅnāga, probably, they are all to be taken in the sense of some predicate or other attributing some *pseudo-property* to the particular, which pseudoproperty, a universal, is to be explained in a negative fashion indicated above.[17] But how about the referential uses of these terms? How about the proper names and the demonstratives?

[17] I am using pseudo-property to interpret what Diṅnāga called *vikalpa* or *sāmānya*.

The answer of the Buddhist on these questions is interesting though a bit complicated. First, we have to understand that the Buddhists along with some other Indian philosophers commonly suffered from what I would call 'linguaphobia'. This does not mean the usual doctrine that language distorts reality. This means that words, speech or language cannot pick out or point to the ultimately real. It is difficult to say whether Diṅnāga suffered from the same phobia, or not. But at least it is partially clear that he did. For him the ultimately reals are the *svalakśaṇas*, the exclusive particulars, each is unique, simple and dissimilar. And they are in principle inexpressible in words. They are only grasped or revealed by our pre-linguistic, pre-constructive sensory or perceptual experience. And they are also momentary as much as the corresponding sensory experience is. This form of phenomenalism supplies the basis of Diṅnāga's nominalism. *The particular* flashes in its own full glory in such a pre-linguistic and pre-constructive sensory experience. If we conceptualize it, it loses its particularity, which means that it loses itself. It is of course not quite correct to say that there are only sensory experiences that are pre-linguistic and pre-constructive. For Diṅnāga, and all Buddhists, extend this notion to mental experiences or internal experiences. Internal states, such as pleasure, pain, anger and other cognitive experiences are also grasped by mind as faculty in a pre-linguistic, pre-constructive 'minding'. This is, however, not important for our purpose. What is important is to note that the unique particular is inexpressible, i.e., unnameable. Why? Let us follow the argument of Dharmakīrti.[18]

Let us recall the model of the Baptismal ceremony. For the Buddhist, however, there is no God, and hence the name-giver is only a person whose authority counts in the community. In a name-giving ceremony, a name-giver by an act of his will, gives a name to an object. Why? For presumably in that way he and others present in the ceremony

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Diṅnāga dissolved *vikalpas* as 'negations' which seem to be only exclusion of the complement classes. Here Hobbesian 'multiple denotation' theory would have been another way out.

[18]Diṅnāga in his *Pramāṇa-samuccaya* describes *svalakṣaṇas* as *'sva-samvedyam anirdeśyaṃ rūpam indriya-gocaram'* Ch. I, Verse 5 cd. Each *svalakṣaṇa* is a unique particular, but it is also *simple* in the sense that there is no *dharma-dharmin* distinction within it. To use a modern notation, a *svalakṣaṇa* cannot even be represented by '(x)', but probably by a colourless, simple *x*. See Dharmakīrti, *Pramāṇa-vārttika, Svārthānumāna*, verse 94.

can use the name, after the ceremony is over, to indicate or designate the object concerned.

'Certainly words (names) do not designate the object without there being a ceremonial fixation of the naming-relation with the object. Ceremonial fixation of naming relation is done for the purpose of usage.'

'From this name whose naming-relation has been ceremonially fixed let everybody understand that object'—this is the usage.'

Dharmakīrti now argues that the same *svalaksana* or the unique particular, which is also momentary, cannot both participate in the naming ceremony by being present there for ostension and later on be designated by the name in question. For this is impossible for the momentary particulars. For they are all distinct from each other, at each moment and in each place. We are in fact talking about a number of similar objects over a period of time rather than the same object. The body of John or Devadatta, for instance, changes at every moment. We are, therefore, using the name for the common, continuing character, a universal, identical with word/concept 'John'. The word 'John', therefore, would be used attributively, it will exclude a very, very big set, and consequently it will narrow down its net to capture, the particular to a considerable extent. But still this smallest net will capture, as is probably the ingrained character of the nets to do so, not only the intended object but also many others who are, to change the metaphor, sailing in the same boat. The implication is probably that, in our present-day terminology, the proper names are *not disguised* descriptions but undisguised predicates or general names applicable to a number of particulars, or to use Quine's phrase, *true* of them.

This rather surprising element or oddity of this theory needs some explaining. When we are talking about an objective reference by a word or a name, the main thing to settle is to fix the objects first, i.e., to fix our standards of sameness and difference. If we talk about bodies for example, for they are considered sometimes basic objects assumed by common sense, do we take into account at all of the different perspectives in which the same body appears? Material bodies, of course, do not appear in the blank, for even the blank sky provides a perspective. Now, it is a decision we make to count our objects, bodies for example, as identical ignoring the changes in their perspectives, so that we can use proper names to refer to them. It is difficult to give a name to what is ever fluctuating in the strict Buddhist sense, for naming assumes some stability in what is being named. This

consideration shows, at least, the arbitrary character of our decision about bodies. A physical body is *conceived* as retaining its sameness over time differences and differences of perspective. It is possible to think of a situation where we choose not to make this decision. In that situation, the reference of our singular terms will become ever slippery. It seems normal, under such circumstances, to advise our terms, our proper names, to switch roles. Instead of naming or referring, they may be asked to describe the particular or take the role of predicate. We would be barking up the wrong tree if we find such a theory of proper names a little odd. It is the ontology of an everchanging, unique-in-itself property—particulars that makes such a theory necessary.

6.7 DEMONSTRATIVES

Let us now talk about the demonstratives, 'this' and 'that'. Do they refer? Yes, in an indirect sort of way or in the way all other names may be said to refer. For according to the Indian theory in general, these two are not proper names but disguised descriptions. In fact they are said to unpack as genuine predicates: 'that' is a subject-place is to be understood as 'something that is what you and I know, not present here but lies at a distance'. It is also argued by the Buddhist, when the speaker utters the expression 'this', the object or the particular datum he was trying to refer to, if he did, in the immediately previous moment has now vanished and he is in all probability referring to an image of the object. So here again the net has missed, i.e., has captured more than it should. Another fact that complicates the theory is that each word is considered, among other things, self-referential, probably in the sense that the utterance of the word reveals the word itself. Hence the net, i.e., the word-utterance, here captures at least three items, the past object, the present image, and the word itself.'[19]

Quine has stated in his well-known thesis, which he has called the inscrutability of reference in the following manner. Objective reference, according to him, is 'behaviourally inscrutable'. Briefly, Quine's argument is that reference involves more than the simple ability to acknowledge a presence.[20] Even if a child or an adult foreigner utters 'red' in the presence of red things or being asked to point to red

[19]This is, in fact, Bhartṛhari's theory. See *Vākyapadīya, Saṃbandha-samuddeśa*, verse 2.
[20]Quine, W. V. (1974), p. 83.

performs his ostension successfully, his behaviour does not guarantee that he is referring to red. Why? For one thing, we cannot assume that this is the case, short of imputing our own ontology to the subject, the child or the adult foreigner. If this is circumvented by pointing out that the child's or the foreign adult's ontology and ours may overlap at many points, Quine argues that the verbal response 'red' does not, in this case, imply that 'red' is being used to name a colour. For it may be naming, instead, a patch, a body or an episode. Therefore it is concluded that objective reference is inscrutable for we do not know what the child is referring to when he utters 'red' in the presence of a red thing. I cite this thesis only to show another insurmountable problem of reference albeit based upon different considerations. What we are dealing with in regard to Diṅnāga or Dharmakīrti, amounts to, not certainly inscrutability of reference, but rather failure of reference. We may capture the object concerned by the word we apply but we also capture more items, necessarily, by the same word. Hence no term is a truly singular term.

6.8 EFFABILITY OF THE PARTICULARS

What we have so far been able to establish? We have here a type of nominalism according to which there are, properly speaking, no proper names, or a theory which claims that our language cannot contain any proper name. Direct designation of things, *svalakṣaṇas*, particulars, seems to be impossible if we allow the doctrine of evanescing particulars, i.e., the flux doctrine, and combine it with the model of a name giving ceremony. It is important to argue to the contrary. We may note that the so-called ineffability, or undesignability of the particular cannot finally be maintained. It is possible with a little ingenuity to designate the particular even if we have to do it through its image. Besides, language and thought, (command etc.,) set people to action. We cannot ride a horse-concept but a real horse. The objects of our action cannot be mere word-concepts, they should be real particulars. The real particular, smoke-occurrence (*dhuma-kṣana*), comes out of the real particular, fire-occurrence (*vahni-kṣana*)). Thus, the relation of succession (causation) holds between such real particulars, although our inference operates with 'words/concepts' or imaginative constructs. But what makes such inference a piece of knowledge (*prama*) is the fact that it is founded upon such real particulars. Therefore, it may be claimed we also reach real particulars

through our word as we do through inference. It may be pointed out that the act of predication, if it is supposed to be directed towards the real particular, cannot be possible unless we have captured that particular by our linguistic effort. We may recall Quine, who in his regimented language wishes to put the burden of objective reference entirely on the apparatus of quantification, variables and identity.

Faced with these problems, the Buddhist (Dharmakīrti) modifies his ineffability doctrine. Of course, it is admitted that the particular is, in some sense, namable. But, what then happens to the alleged scriptural support of the ineffability doctrine? Here what I have called the linguaphobia of the Buddhists comes to play a role. It seems that these philosophers 'fear' language while they nevertheless ride upon it all along. It is a bid odd to fear the horse while one is always riding upon it.[21] Let us see briefly what is behind this oddity. Reality is *ultimately* nameless, it is only for our convenience (for thinking about, for communicating and talking about) that we assign, or pretend to assign, by an act of will, a name to it. Of course, in naming we follow some guiding principles agreed upon by the community. But it is argued that the purely arbitrary and conventional character of naming should not be forgotten. There are, it is believed, no essences or basic properties in the objects which are responsible for, and hence invariably connected with, names or words. In our search for the reality, therefore, we should not confuse name with things. What we search for and try to capture and communicate is the reality, even the real particulars, if you like, which are ultimately nameless. Naming is done only for the sake of our convenience. In order to maintain this point and also to resolve the above problem regarding the scriptures, the Buddhist resorts to the familiar exegetical device. The particular is unnameable from the ultimate point of view, but, of course, it is namable from the point of view of convention etc. Jñānaśrī says: 'The scripture says that nothing is effable ultimately.'[22] The implication is that from non-ultimate standpoint, of course, the particular is nameable.

We may turn now to the other feature of this theory. I have said that this theory is not conceptualism, although we have been talking in terms of concepts all the time. But being consistent with nominalism, the Buddhists do not interpose concepts between words

[21]This is expressed as: *aśvam evābhirūḍhaḥ san taṃ vismṛtavānasi.*

[22]Jñānaśrī, p. 229.

and what the words are supposed to apply to. The conceptualist differs from the realist in saying that a word is general and meaningful because there is in the mind a corresponding general concept or a general idea. In his explanation, he cannot let the concepts be located in the things nor can he assign them to a separate world. We generally think of the classical British empiricists, when we talk about conceptualism. What they did was to talk in terms of 'ideas' which were presumably universals divorced from the things and wedded to the mind. Nominalists and the Buddhists, however, would like to get the universal divorced from the things and wedded to the words. The problem of universals is in this way turned into the problem of explaining away the *meaning* of words. How this could be done? The general ideas of the conceptualists do not fare very well. For, among other things, (mental) ideas appear to be elusive and private. [Since I have talked about the phobia of the Buddhists about language, in the same vein, I may mention the 'phobia' of many modern philosophers about privacy or psychologism. Frege, for example, developed his notion of 'thought' (*Gedanke*) partly in order to oppose psychologism. But then he was charged with Platonism].

To be true to empiricism, conceptualists will have to accept the Gassendi dictum, 'Nothing is in the mind without it first being in the senses'. They will have to allow in this way the sensory basis, to some extent, of concepts. One possible way to stop short of realism and continue to maintain that non-particulars are not real, would be to develop, as Hume did, a 'resemblance theory' to account for the origin of general ideas.[23] The task of a nominalist is apparently much more severe.

6.9 STRICT NOMINALISM

A nominalist accepts a world of only discrete, unique particulars. For Diṅnāga, this apparently rules out any actual similarity or resemblance between two such particulars. If a nominalist is also a Buddhist then he will have to admit that all such particulars are, in addition, evanescent, property-like particulars. This, however, does not help us to explain why and how we do have, as we certainly do, general terms in our language. One explanation is that we 'create' them by our own choice, either arbitrarily or for our convenience and as

[23]Hume, D., *Treatise*: Bk. I, Part IV, Sec. II.

long as there is agreement among the language-users, this need not present any problem. The Buddhist explanation has also a moral dimension. According to them, we are impelled, as we are so conditioned from beginningless time, to invent objects of our desire, lust, fear, etc., and hence we objectify with the help of language and construction, although the reality, i.e., the real particulars neither lend any support to it nor resist it. But this is hardly a satisfactory explanation. An explanation that can be sustained will probably have to appeal to some modified version of the Resemblance theory. The Buddhists were however not unaware of it. Let us see how.

Naming by arbitrary choice smacks of Humpty Dumptyism. But perhaps, a *pure* nominalist has to be a disciple of Humpty Dumpty. 'When I use a word it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less . . . The question is which is to be the master,—that's all'. If no two particulars resemble each other in any conceivable respect, then use of a term to apply to both becomes a matter of decree from Lord Humpty Dumpty.

The nominalist can however be less militant and accept some forms of the resemblance doctrine, or even a 'family resemblance' doctrine. By making use of a judicious mixture of arbitrariness and convenience he can not only account for the origin of general terms but also argue for a regimentation of ordinary language *a la* Quine. Quine, to be sure, is not a nominalist, but his sympathy for nominalism (via Goodman) is well known. His regimented language is isolated and schematized in a familiar form, the predicate calculus. It has a simple grammar and a lexicon of predicates, and variables of quantification are the only singular terms. This seems to accommodate nominalism, as long as we do not worry about the meanings of predicates, but only understand how to apply them truly or falsely to the particulars. For a more suitable language for nominalism one may consult Goodman, who is perhaps more serious minded among modern philosophers about the case for nominalism (although his position is differently formulated in his new book).[24]

Turning to the Buddhists, we may note that Dharmakīrti clearly rejected Humpty Dumptyism. He argues that it is true that meaning is given to words arbitrarily, i.e. according to the desire of the person, but it is not that the desire is uncontrollable and admits no guidance.

[24]One needs to be careful here. The variable of this language have to range over a nominalistic universe, but set theory is also formulated in such a language. Goodman's position is to be found in his recent book *The Ways of Worldmaking*.

For, the final controlling factor for actions and desires is the goal or the result that is intended to be achieved (*phalārtha*). The naming act is therefore controlled by the goal which is communication.[25]

'Certainly all determinate efforts are undertaken for the fruit. For fruitless efforts are to be ignored.'

Alice rightly wondered whether the goal of communication will be achieved with Humpty Dumptyism.

Second, Dharmakīrti argued that it is a mistake to assert that each particular is exclusive and unique. For distinction between ultimate particulars is ultimate or germane to them:[26]

'Ultimate objects (particulars) by themselves do neither relate with (or resemble) nor differ from, one another. It is falsification of cognition that assigns to them either one form (word/concept) or many forms (many words/concepts).'

The ultimates are in principle uncharacterizable. (This also means that they are in principle ineffable, or indescribable). Hence to the extent they are characterized as 'unique' or 'particular' or 'distinct' or 'similar', it involves language and thought-construction. Therefore there are no ultimate characterization, although we use such characteristics in our discourses. Dharmakīrti says that the particulars or the ultimates are by nature neutral to distinctness or identity, but some of them *happen to cause* or give rise to a similar type of cognition and do not cause any other type. In other words, it is merely a contingent fact that cognitions of similarity emerge from the particulars which are in themselves dissimilar. This allows us to group them under one word/concept by excluding others.[27] Hence a sort of resemblance theory is also appealed to here and that apparently saves the day for the Buddhist.

There are, however, some advantages in the Buddhist theory. First and foremost, the intimacy of language and thought is brought to the fore. It is even believed here that they are like two sides of the same coin. Whether the two together constitute a second-order reality or not is an interesting question of metaphysics which we may leave aside for the present. But it is an important point, for at least on the

[25]Dharmakīrti, *Pramāṇavārttika, Svārthānumāna*, verse 95.
[26]Ibid., verse 89.
[27]Ibid., verses 75, 111, 121.

face of it, this notion avoids the extreme mentalism and privacy of meanings or ideas. For language is a social art, and hence the posits due to language are common properties of all those who play the language-game. The charge of psychologism is mostly met in this way.

Second, the appeal to essences or ingrained properties are obviously avoided and hence the spirit of empiricism is upheld. The significant part of the theory is that grouping is allowed on the basis of exclusion and negation. Two or more particulars do not have to *agree* in any respect for being grouped together for the application of a general term, but they will only have to jointly *disagree* from certain other particulars, i.e. the rest of the universe. This is what is accomplished by saying that the word 'tree' under this theory means 'exclusion of non-trees'. There seems to be a sort of artificiality in this analysis of meaning. But is it really artificial? Consider the following: I see an object at a distance which I cannot identify either as a dog or as a tiger. But even at this stage, the particular or its cognitive counterpart tells me a lot of things, viz. that it is neither a boat, nor a bird, nor an airplane, nor an automobile, nor a fly, nor a worm, nor a rose, nor a daisy and so on and so forth. It is not that we think about the others individually; we may get them in one sweep. And in this way we may identify it as a dog eventually. Therefore it is not unnatural to assume that successful application of 'dog' means that the process of exclusion of the rest has just been concluded. We may also choose to exclude another set of objects, viz. that it is not a chair, not water, not a table, not a bed, and so on. In this way we may end up applying the word 'animal' to it to mean exclusion of non-animals. In any case it is argued that the application of words is illuminating in this negative way; it can tell us what the object/particular is not, instead of telling what it is, for attempt to tell what it is will either fail or end up countenancing entities other than particulars. We may say, borrowing an expression of Quine ('Flight from intension') that this is the Buddhist flight from countenancing non-particulars.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Ineffability

7.1 THE DOCTRINE

Very often in philosophy of religion one tries to evaluate what we may call religious/mystical experience. The common claim of all mystics is that the mystical reality or (and) the mystical experience is ineffable. This ineffability doctrine obviously presupposes an 'effability' doctrine, a theory of meaning, a philosophy of language. After examining the two rival theories of meaning that became prominent in the Indian philosophical/religious tradition, I now come to examine the 'ineffability' doctrine:

'Wherefrom words turn back
along with the mind'. (Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.4.1)

Proper understanding of the ineffability thesis requires, I think, a lot more than what can be done here. One needs to understand for example the designative, descriptive, metaphorical and evocative functions of our language. I shall try here only an impressionistic account regarding different theories about these functions of the language.

William James, in his important study, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), noted four common distinctive marks of any 'mystical' experience:[1] (1) ineffability, (2) noetic quality, which James explained as the experiencer's feeling that the mystical experience is a deeper *insight* into truth and an authority on truth, (3) transiency, and (4) passivity. W. T. Stace in his 1960 book, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, has

[1]James, W., pp. 292–93.

mentioned several other characteristics of a mystical experience.[2] But I do not think he makes any substantial addition to the above list. Of the four characteristics noted by James, I will have nothing to say here about the last two. I will concentrate upon the first which, to my mind, is more important in the sense of being more universal as a mark of mysticism, or, at least, of what I shall call religious mysticism. Regarding the second, I will only make some incidental comments.

First, the character of ineffability. Let me begin by quoting two verses from Sanskrit in translation:

'Not a word was uttered by you, O Master, and (yet) all the disciples were refreshed by the *Dharma-Shower*'.

(Ascribed to Nāgārjuna, G. Tucci)

'How strange! Under the banyan tree are old men. Their teacher is only a boy. His explanation consists in silence. Yet the disciples have been made free from doubts (through correct understanding)'.

(*Dakṣiṇāmūrtistotra*, Masson and Patwardhan).[3]

The two verses quoted above are from two different streams of Indian tradition. The first is taken from the tradition of Mahāyāna Buddhism, while the second is from Advaita Vedānta of Śaṃkara. Taken together, they present us with the classic, and in every sense, poetic formulation of what I shall call here the *Ineffability* doctrine. Simply staged, the *Ineffability* doctrine means that (a) the Ultimate Reality is ineffable, and (b) the mystical experience in which the Ultimate Reality is supposed to be revealed is also beyond words. The Upanisadic mysticism of ancient India was eloquent about the ineffability of the bliss of Brahman. Thus the *Taittirīya* says.

Wherefrom words turn back along with the mind, without reaching the bliss of Brahman.

and the *Kaṭha* notes:

'This is it'—thus they recognize
The highest happiness that is *ineffable*.[4]

[2]Stace, W. T., p. 44.
[3]Masson & Patwardhan 1970, Vol. II, p. 36.
[4]*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 2.4.1., *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*.

In both these passages, the authors insist that the peak experience in Brahman realization is something that cannot be put into words. It is *too deep* for words.

7.2 PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE AND THE MYSTICAL

It seems to be a matter of curious coincidence that the ancient philosophers of religion and the mystics are apparently in agreement with some modern philosophers of language who, under the influence of Ludwig Wittgenstein, hold to the doctrine of Ineffability in some form or other. It is, however, true that the Western mystics and theologians in the Judeo-Christian tradition propound the *Ineffability* doctrine in the sense that there is something called God or the divine but nothing in principle can be said about its nature. And this is not exactly the same as the position of Wittgenstein in *Tractatus*. Much of what is called the mystical in *Tractatus* depends a great deal upon what is said in the whole book about logic and language, objects and facts. But, nevertheless, Wittgenstein made many pronouncements that strike a very familiar note in the heart of the mystics:

'Most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical'

TLP, 4.003

'They are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical'.

6.522

'The main point is the theory of what can be expressed (gesagt) by propositions—i.e. by language (and, what comes to the same, what can be *thought*) and what cannot be expressed by propositions, but only shown (gezeigt); which I believe, is the cardinal problem of philosophy . . .'[5]

(Letter to Russell, quoted in Anscombe, p. 161)

Some interesting formulations of the ineffability doctrine are, nevertheless, found in the Indian tradition in writings of those who dealt with the philosophy of language and the philosophy of perception. The Nāgārjunian critique of language is well known: The ultimate reality (*tattva*) is beyond what is diversified by our discursive thought or language (cf. *prapañcair aprapañcitam*).[6]

[5]Anscombe, E., p. 161.
[6]Nāgārjuna, M. K., Ch. 18, verse 9.

Āryadeva, for example, contends that although silence (*āryatūṣṇīṃbhāva*) is the best method to instruct the Ultimate Reality, philosophic discourses are not entirely useless:[7]

'Just as a *mleccha* (one speaking a foreign tongue) cannot be made to understand by any other language but his own, so also (ordinary) people cannot be made to understand by anything except the conventional language'.

In the *Lankāvatāra-sūtra*, the Tathāgata says this with the help of a simile:

'Just as a king or merchant (at first) attracts his children with the help of beautiful clay animals for play, and then (at the right time) gives them real animals as presents similarly I attract men by showing various shadow characteristics of the dharmas and then instruct them (when the right time comes) the *Bhūtakoṭi* which is to be experienced by each of them personally'.[8]

One may be reminded here of the 'ladder' analogy of Wittgenstein.

Bhartṛhari, in developing his philosophy of language, propounded a doctrine which says that the relation between the name and the named is unnameable, or more generally, the relation between the signifier (words, sentences) and the signified (things, facts) is insignifiable.[9] This may mean that in order to signify something or even name something by a linguistic expression, a word, we need to depend upon a basis or ground (*nimitta*)—a theory of meaning which is already accepted and discussed by the Naiyāyikas (Lecture 4). The result will be obviously paradoxical if we apply this principle to signify the signification relation. Another problem similar to that of ineffability is apparently involved in Frege's doctrine of 'sense' which is supposed to determine the referent of a word. For the sense of an expression is the mode of presentation of its referent. But to convey what the sense of the expression is, we have to choose that means or *mode* of stating what the referent is which displays the sense.[10]

Diṅnāga, while developing his theory of sense-perception, talked

[7]Ibid., Ch. 18, Chandrakīrti quotes it under verse 8.

[8]*Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra, Sagāthaka* verses 173–74.

[9]Bhartṛhari, Kaṇḍa III, *Sambandha Samuddeśa*, verses 3–4. See Herzberger and Herberger.

[10]Russell's famous critique of Frege: 'no backward road' from reference to sense (1905). Dummett (1973) comments (p. 227): 'We might here borrow a famous pair of terms from the *Tractatus*, and say that, for Frege, we *say* what the referent of a word is, and thereby *show* what its sense is'.

about another type of ineffability, the eneffability of the *svalakṣaṇas*, exclusive 'property'-particulars. They are, to use Dinnaga's own words, self-manifesting (*sva-samvedya*), inexpressible in words (*anirdeśya*) and visible to the respective sense-organs (*indriya-gocara*). What *can* be seen, *cannot* be said, which is not exactly what one finds in the *Tractatus* of Wittgenstein: what cannot be said but somehow can be shown.

Indian philosophers, who hold to the doctrine of Ineffability in some form or other, agree that all philosophic discourses about the Ultimate Reality are provisional, but not useless.

7.3 METAPHOR

How does the mystic present the ineffable?

I shall limit my comments to how the Indian philosophers tried to present the ineffable, i.e., the Ultimate Reality. Towards the end I would concentrate on Nāgārjuna. My own position is that the so-called ineffable is not really, or ultimately, ineffable.

Broadly speaking, Indian philosophers resort to one of the three different methods by which they think the notion of the ineffable ultimate reality may be effectively conveyed. The *first*, and perhaps the most common, method is to use poetic metaphors and rhetoric to convey the notion that is, in principle, incommunicable. Literature on mysticism beginning from the Upanishads abounds in such poetic descriptions. A poet and a mystic, though different, are comparable. Mystical poets form a familiar category. If poetic experience is communicable through poetry, then a mystic-poet can possibly communicate, through mystic-poems, his mystical experiences that would have eluded communication in everyday language. The mystical experience can thus be communicable through a device: poetry, metaphor, analogy etc. Thus, one can say that the mystical experience, like the poetic experience, is not totally incommunicable. Only one has to find a different sort of medium to communicate it, a mystical poem. I would classify most passages in the Upaniṣads under this category. (Here I shall be using the expression 'the mystical' which will ambiguously denote both the mystical experience and its content, the ultimate reality. According to the general literature on mysticism, however, these two are regarded as *non-different*).

If the above argument is considered cogent then it has the support of a very well-known aesthetician of India, Ānandavardhana. The medium can, of course, be imperfect and not everybody would

understand what the mystic is trying to say, but still communication of some sort takes place, and not everybody understands poetry in the same way either.

In this context, I interpret the *ineffability* thesis as one that says that our language, in its ordinary use, is inadequate to express the ultimate reality. The *poetic* or metaphorical use of language is therefore a substitute for the descriptive use of language, but the mystic may still claim that it falls short of the ideal of successful communication unless the receiving end is adequately and properly sensitized, i.e. roughly the listener shares a kindred feeling and an attitude. As Al Gazali exclaimed, 'Who will understand drunkenness if one does not get drunk himself'?[11] An Indian mystic poet said, 'The pain from the poison of snake-bite is unknown to persons never bitten by snake'.

It seems to me that this point about the success of mystic poems is compatible with what Paul Henle says in 'Mysticism and Semantics'.[12] Showing that the principle of commutativity is ineffable in a commutative symbolism, he generalized that 'there are symbolism in which certain things cannot be said and so are ineffable'. He also allows that 'to show that a statement is ineffable, one must have a broader symbolism in which it can be expressed, but this does not prevent a statement being ineffable with regard to some particular symbolism'.

The religious mystic may claim that his insight is ineffable with regard to all known symbolisms. But if we permit poetry, a different sort of symbolism to convey the mystical, as many respectable religious mystics did all over the world, then we have to say that our ordinary language puts a limitation on what can be expressed properly in it ('one's symbolism limits what can be said' Henle) and therefore mysticism is ineffable with regard to it. All we have to stipulate is that the poet's language or the mystic's language is a different sort of symbolism, where what is ineffable in ordinary everyday language is at least communicable or presentable, and therefore expressible in a sense.

One may dispute the point by saying that the poetic language is not different from ordinary language. But the point remains, even if we abandon the example of poetic language, as long as we allow, as Henle's paper seems to imply, that the conceptual system of ordinary

[11]James, W., p. 369.
[12]Henle, P., p. 421.

language is limited in the sense that not everything that is knowable is expressible within the system. This leaves open the possibility that a different symbolism can be devised where what is not expressible in ordinary language can be presented in some way or other.

Henle has shown that our study of semantics can establish that there are symbolism in which certain things cannot be said, and so are ineffable. But it cannot establish the fact that what the mystics are trying to express is ineffable in this way. To establish this fact we need at least to find a new symbolism for expressing what is now inexpressible. I have suggested that poetry of the mystic may be taken to be such a new symbolism, and perhaps a flash of inspiration, much in the same way as a poetic inspiration, can provide this new required symbolism.

7.4 THE PARADOXICAL

The *second method* is to use paradoxes and contradiction. Of course, in poetic language we have already paradoxes and contradiction but they are all part of the rhetoric or poetic style, and they need not be treated as real paradoxes or contradiction. As the Indian aesthete would put it, such contradictions are not *dūṣana* (faults) but *bhūṣana* (ornaments) that constitute beauty. But in ordinary language a paradox is a paradox, and a contradiction is a contradiction. It is often claimed by writers on mysticism today that this is the paradoxicality of the mystical consciousness itself. Let us understand what we mean by paradoxes here. I do not think that the mystics talk about antinomies such as the antinomy of classes, or of self-reference. Ordinarily a paradox means any conclusion that sounds absurd but that has an argument to sustain it. In the case of antinomy, the sustaining argument is seen to be sound. But the mystical paradoxes consist in merely joint application of contradictory predicates or descriptions. Examples of this paradox are generally culled from the writings of the mystics. Such opposite predicates are generally applied to the mystical, the ineffable ultimate reality.

Let us use W. T. Stace, a very popular writer in recent times, for collecting examples of the mystical paradoxes.[13] One is called the pantheistic paradox which says that God and the world are both identical and non-identical. The other is called the plenum-vacuum

[13]Stace, W. T., pp. 207ff.

paradox. Another paradox is called that of the dissolution of individuality, which talks of an experience where the ordinary subject-object dichotomy is abolished. All these paradoxes have been widely authenticated by the mystics in their talks and writings. The critics of mysticism usually argue that because of this paradoxicality of their claim, their credibility should be in question. But I think this criticism is misdirected. For, if paradoxes are used as a device to communicate the ineffable, much as poetic language is used for the same purpose, then we cannot use them are our ground for rejecting mysticism as incomprehensible. For the mystic points out that of course what he is trying to say is incomprehensible as long as we try to comprehend it with our familiar symbol system or the ordinary language. But ordinary language is the one (in some cases the only one) the mystic has at his disposal and he has to use it for communication. For he is trying to communicate with such ordinary people as want to listen. As Āryadeva points out, when you want to communicate with a foreigner who does not know your language, you have to use the foreign language and do your best even if your thought is ineffable in that language. Thus, the mystic is trying his best to communicate with the help of the medium he has available for that purpose. He uses paradox, i.e., asserts two mutually contradictory statements to get his point across, viz., what he is trying to say in ordinary language is in fact ineffable in that language. He might as well have remained silent or said simply that it is ineffable. For all these three ways would be equivalent means as far as the goal of communication is concerned, but the use of paradox is certainly more attractive and effective as a means than remaining silent or saying simply that it is ineffable.

I agree with Stace that paradoxes and contradictions used by the mystics are not just a matter of rhetoric (although I insist that the mystic also uses rhetoric and poetry to describe his mystical experiences to others, see the previous section), and also that it is futile to try to resolve these paradoxes rationally, for that will only miss the point. I have also said that these paradoxes are not antinomical so that a solution of them would not be necessary to save the basis of our logic and language. But while Stace concludes that the paradox or contradictory statement is a *correct* description of the mystical experience, I argue that it is only one of the effective means, a successful one, of communicating the ineffability of the mystical. Thus, while Stace argues that the mystic is really mistaken when he says that the mystical is ineffable, for according to Stace, the paradoxical 'language

correctly mirrors the experience' (p. 305), I wish to respect the mystic's report as true when he says that the mystical is ineffable. I also claim that the mystic uses paradoxes not out of 'embarrassment' (as Stace would have it) but deliberately and wilfully.

I hesitate to accept another conclusion of Stace. He rightly distinguishes the world of multiplicity and everyday experience from the undifferentiated unity of the mystic. This is, as I understand it, what the Indian mystics starting with the Buddha, maintained in their talk of two levels of reality: the phenomenal or conventional (*samvṛti*) and the ultimate level (*paramārtha*). But Stace goes further to say that 'the logic and the illogic occupy different territories of experience' (p. 271). If this implies that logic is useless for the mystic in his attempt to communicate, I would disagree. For this would not only defeat the purpose of most mystics of India, who invariably used logic to communicate, but it would also contradict Stace's own conclusion that the mystical paradoxes are '*unvarnished* contradiction' and not just apparent contradiction which can be got rid of or resolved by explanation.[14] For without the application of logic, I do not see how these paradoxes remain paradoxical or self-contradictory. In other words, Stace first seems to refuse to resolve the paradoxes and then wishes to dissolve them completely by one stroke, i.e., by taking logic out of the hands of the mystics. An Indian mystic would like to retain and use logic if only to show or reveal mysticism with the help of paradoxicality and contradiction.

7.5 VIA NEGATIVA

The *third* method is *via negativa*, or what the Indians traditionally call '*neti, neti*'. Plainly stated, this means that the ineffable can be communicated in our language by denying or negating all the predicates of our language when they are applied to the ineffable. Here, of course, we run into problems with our ordinary use of negation and the laws of logic. This method, as I understand it, is distinguished from the second method in that the former consists in the simultaneous assertion of mutual contradictories, while the latter consists in simple denial of a possible predication. I think Nāgārjuna was a champion of this method although the initial inspiration came

[14]Ibid., p. 253.

from the Buddha himself, who again might have derived his own inspiration from his acquaintance with the Upaniṣads.

It is useful to clarify some ambiguities at this point. In the discussion of the first method, I have not distinguished between the mystical and the mystical experience. In the second method I have taken the position that the ineffable nature of the *mystical*, the reality, or the Ultimate Reality, can be conveyed by the use of paradoxes and contradiction. In the third method, I am concerned with the conveying of the ineffability of the nature of the Ultimate Reality. Thus there seems to be a difference between the effectiveness of the paradoxical and the negative. The paradoxical may be a 'pointer' to the right direction, the negative conveys the sense of ineffability of the nature of the Ultimately real.

F. Staal has argued that oriental mystical doctrines are basically rational, and in his attempt to prove this he has shown how the negative method used in the Buddhist tetralemma does not contravene the law of non-contradiction.[15] In fact, Staal admits that the tetralemma contravenes the law of excluded middle, but he argues that since the excluded middle can be considered a non-fundamental law, this does not prove the tetralemma to be 'irrational'. I wish to discuss further the tetralemma and its alleged rationality.

7.6 THE BUDDHIST TETRALEMMA

Let us concentrate on the tetralemma of the *catuskoti* of Nāgārjuna. They can certainly be rationally interpreted: Nāgārjuna himself consciously used logic and logical laws of contradiction and excluded middle to justify this method of presenting the ineffable through negation. Sometimes, he might have ignored the law of excluded middle, but never the law of non-contradiction. In order to explain Nāgārjuna one has to explain different senses of negation.

First, there is the important distinction between a term negation and a propositional negation. The Indians called it, as both Staal and I have argued elsewhere, the distinction between the *paryudāsa* and the *prasajya-pratiṣedha*.[16] A *paryudāsa* is more a commitment (an implicit affirmation of something) than a denial. We say 'x is not blue' and if

[15]Staal, F., pp. 37–46.

[16]Matilal, B.K., 1971, pp. 146–67.

the statement is equivalent to 'x is un-blue' it is called *paryudāsa*. A *paryudāsa* has a commitment aspect. It is perhaps comparable with the 'choice' or 'weak' negation. But a *prasajya-pratiṣedha* is propositional in the sense that it negates a positive assertion or predication. It can say what the subject is not, but cannot imply what it is, or it says what description does not apply to the subject but not what kind of description might apply. Unlike the previous one, it does not locate the subject in a definite domain or category. The user of such negation assumes provisionally (*prasajya*) that some predicate may apply and then negates it. In other words, he has no positive commitment.

Pratiṣedha only denies or negates. This point was not clearly made in my earlier writing, and hence I accept the criticism of Staal and others on this point. But the point remains. This negative act (*pratiṣedha*) is committed only to the falsity of what is negated. To throw light on the Indian notion of *pratiṣedha* and *paryudāsa*, it might be better to apply the speech-act analysis, or something of that sort. Thus, with regard to a proposition, *P*, we can assert it or deny it or we can *refuse* or *reject* it (i.e., withhold assent from *P* and also from not-P). It is not unusual to distinguish between denial and rejection, for denial would then mean only asserting non-P. John Searle distinguishes, in his book on *Speech Acts*, between what he calls 'propositional' and 'illocutionary' negation.[17] We may appeal to such distinction in this connection. Lukasiewicz, in his book on Aristotle, distinguishes also between assertion (as valid), non-assertion (as not-valid), and rejection (as contra-valid). (I have been led into this way of analysing negation in the Mādhyamika context by a suggestion from Hans Herzberger).

Let me now discuss what is usually called the tetralemma of Nāgārjuna. For illustrative purpose, I would use a verse of the Madhyamaka-śāstra which embodies some formal characters of his argument. Here the four possibilities are formulated in the form of four questions and answer to each is given in the negative.

Q. Is a thing self-existent?	Answer: NO
Is it not self-existent?	NO
Is it both?	NO
is it neither?	NO

[17]Searle, J., pp. 32–33. 'I do not promise to come'—its utterance is not a promise but *a refusal to make a promise*. See its resonance in Sañjaya-like pronouncements as 'I do not say thus' and 'I do not say otherwise'.

Notice that the first alternative is negated because it goes against the notion of 'change' or 'becoming' and the second is likewise rejected for it goes against the notion of 'being' or permanence. The third alternative involves a self-contradiction, hence it is rejected. All these three negatives are *prasajya pratiṣedha*, negative speech act of a certain kind. The fourth question seems to be an attempt to formulate the result or implication of these speech acts together. Hence the fourth, I think, is a special case of negative act, 'NO', that *asks* us to look beyond. I wish to call it 'leap' negation, or the Madhyamaka negation, the negation of 'emptiness'. It empties all conceivable possibilities of discourse. It is the 'NO' of 'silence'. If other negations constituted the ladder, this is comparable to the kicking away of the ladder. Or to use a parable of the Buddha himself, we take a medicine to cure a disease but the complete cure comes when that medicine is finally thrown out of the system.

The formulation of the fourth alternative seems to imply that there is no respect for the law of excluded third. Nāgārjuna rejects this alternative also because it involves contradiction. Thus I do not see why Staal is anxious to treat the law of excluded middle separately in his attempt to disprove the 'irrationality' argument against the tetralemma.[18] It is with the fourth 'NO' that the Madhyamaka *points up to the ineffable*. That is why I have argued elsewhere along with Jacques May and Schayer, that when the Madhyamaka negates a proposition, it does not follow that he accepts himself the logical consequence of such a negation.[19] It is, it seem to me, a limiting case of a simple negative speech act which does not necessitate any affirmation of the opposite possibility.

Nāgārjuna used on many occasions a dilemma instead of a teralemma. In fact he referred to the well-known dialogue between the Buddha and Kātyāyana, where a dilemma was presented to the Buddha and he negated both alternatives. This, incidentally, shows that the usual assumption among scholars, voiced by many and repeated by Troy Organ, that the Buddha refused to answer the so-called *avyākṛta* questions, is not quite correct, for the Buddha did give his answers to these questions on other occasions as recorded in the Canons. He answered them in the negative. In the dialogue, it was asked:

[18]Staal, p. 39.
[19]Matilal (1971), pp. 162–65.

'It is'? 'No'. 'It is not'? 'No'.

The Buddha rejects the first because it leads to eternalism, and the second because of annihilationism.[20] I would interpret the second 'No' here as the 'leap' negation, for it is similar to the fourth negation of the tetralemma. IT EMPTIES all possibilities.

It is however not easy to empty all possibilities if we are thinking in terms of disjunction and conjunction of possibilities. But perhaps we can look into the matter in the following way. A proposition may be regarded as a description of a possible state of affairs. And its negation will describe another possible state of affairs.

In the standard two-valued logic, if '*p*' is negated, then it is equivalent to saying 'NOT *p*' is true, or that 'NOT p' is assertible. This logic is based upon the law of excluded middle. The law states that either *p* or NOT *p* and there is no third possibility. Thus, '*p*' is false means 'NOT *p*' *is* true and vice versa. The possibility of 'neither *p* nor NOT *p*' is not admitted. Also the law of double negation holds here for 'NOT NOT *p*' is deemed equivalent to '*p*'. The law of non-contradiction, of course, applies. Hence the possibility of 'both *p* and NOT *p*' is rejected.

Now, working with both the principles of contradiction and excluded middle, if we negate the first, we are committed to the state of affairs described by the second, and vice versa. In other words, there are two possibilities. If we negate the first and the second also, then the result may be called a contradiction. This contradiction may be interpreted in the manner of Strawson as writing a sentence on the board and then wiping it off.[21] Or, we may interpret the result in another way. By the first negative act the ball (in a tennis game) is sent to the opponent's court. By the second negative act, the opponent may send it back to the first player. But he has a choice. He refuses to play the game. Thus, the last negation of the Mādhyamika may be interpreted as, instead of being a contradiction, as refusal to play the language game. The Mādhyamika game may be seen as one of allowing the opponent to construct the possibilities and thereby exhausts all the possibilities and then negating all the possibilities one by one, the last negation emptying all possibilities. Thus, I would assume that it derives its special force from the result of its being the last in

[20]See Candrakīrti on Nāgārjuna's *Mādhyamika Kārikā*, Ch. 15, verse 7.

[21]Strawson, P. F. (1952), Ch. 1, Pt. 1, 3. (p. 3).

the order of presentation 1, 2, 3, 4. If one re-ordered them 4, 3, 2, 1, it would lose that force.

Staal, in his interpretation of the tetralemma, has gone further to deduce that there are 'other alternatives than *A* and not-*A* and the principle of excluded middle does not hold' (51).[22] I hesitate to accept this to be the general position of Nāgārjuna. For one thing, Nāgārjuna on many occasions uses the law to reject the opponent's alternative (e.g. 'How can there be anything besides "own-being" and "other-being"?'*). For another, in order to formulate a dilemma and thereby exhaust all the possibilities, one needs to use the law of excluded middle. It is true that if the fourth alternative is interpreted (as it is supposed to be in the example of tetralemma cited by Staal) as the joint assertion of the negation of the first two alternatives, then it is indistinguishable from the third unless we ignore for the moment the law of double negation. But then it is arguable that a tetralemma is not essential for Nāgārjuna to prove his point, a dilemma or a trilemma would do the job just as well.

The last negation, I venture to suggest, it like kicking away the raft (in Candrakīrti's imagery) after you have crossed the river. It presents the ineffable by what I have called the negative method. It shows the ineffable but cannot express it:

'There the eye goes not, speech goes not, nor the mind. We know not, we understand not, how one would teach it'?[23]

[22]Staal, p. 44.

[23]*Kena Upaniṣad*, 1, 23.

*Mādhyamika Kārika, Ch. 15, verse 4.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Necessity and Indian Logic

8.1 INTRODUCTION

When I included a discussion of the concept of necessity in Indian philosophy, in a lecture series entitled 'Indian Philosophy of Religion', some eyebrows were raised. While the importance of this topic was readily understood by most of my compatriots who deal with Indian philosophy (and some have already expressed the view that the concept of necessity is not to be found in Indian philosophy!), the question of its relevance in a Stephanos lecture series became a matter of debate. I, however, find the notion of necessity to be an important issue in the philosophy of religion for various reasons.

First, I must concede that doubts in the minds of my audience are well-founded, for what I say here would not make it visible how the notion of necessity can be connected with philosophy of religion. I would be concerned here mainly with discussing problems of logic and theory of knowledge in the Indian tradition, and questioning the view that Indian classical philosophers generally lacked such modal notion as necessity, possibility and contingency. I would try to show that this is not the case. In my opinion, if it were true, then some important arguments of the Indian philosophers would lose the essential force of persuasion which, I think, they certainly possess. For example, Nāgārjuna's argument that 'it is' leads to eternalism would have been totally unconvincing, if such modal notions as necessity and omnitemporality are not also presupposed. This also makes the general point that the concepts of modal logic are parallel to the concepts of 'tense' logic, although I am not sure whether on occasions they could be indistinguishable. My point is that Nāgārjuna's point

is made as much in terms of omnitemporality as of necessity. And in the Indian tradition, these two were not always clearly distinguished.

Second, and this is my main reason for inclusion of this topic in the series, the notion of necessity has recently been increasingly discussed in the theology and philosophy of religion in the West. The impetus came from N. Malcolm's 1960 paper defending St. Anselm's Ontological Argument. Very roughly, the argument regards *necessary existence* to be a perfection. My purpose here is not to talk about some parallel Ontological Argument from the classical Indian tradition. I wish to point out that a notion of necessity (and/or omnitemporality) is implied by the *Yogasūtra* theology in 1.24 and 1.25. Vyāsa, for example, distinguishes a *kevalin* from God, saying that the former was at one time in bondage, while for the latter it is *impossible* (*cf. sambhāvyate naivam īśvarasya*) to conceive a prior state of bondage (*purā bandha koṭiḥ*) or even a posterior state (*uttarā koṭiḥ*), for he is always/necessarily free (*sadaiva muktaḥ, sadaiva īśvara iti*). Even the word '*niratiśaya*' in 1.25 is very close, in my opinion, to modal notions. Besides, I wish to translate the Nyāya characterization of God as '*nitya-sarvañja*' as 'necessarily omniscient', for it is asserted to be the *svabhāva* 'nature' or 'essence' of God.

With this as a prelude, I first argue that, in spite of the dominance of empiricism in the formulation of Nyāya logical theories, neither the Jaina-Buddhist logicians nor even the Naiyāyikas were entirely unfamiliar with the philosophic significance of such modal notions as necessity, impossibility and contingency. Second, I would also show that one needs some concept of necessary existence in order to move from 'existence' to 'eternalism'. Third, Dharmakīrti's argument for the flux doctrine exploits the notion of necessity.

Suppose I have seen all the children of Maitra and they are all dark in complexion. From this knowledge am I allowed to infer that the future son of Maitra will also be dark? The Jaina logicians raised this question against the general position of many Indian philosophers who held the following: an inference is necessarily warranted by a knowledge of the invariable relation between two items (the relation is called variously *vyāpti, pratibandha,* and *avinābhāva*) and such a prior knowledge is usually derived from empirical examples of their co-existence or togetherness. The example is reminiscent of the discussion of the problem of induction in the West with reference to such examples as 'All crows are black' or 'All swans are white'. But this similarity in the examples is somewhat superficial. For suppose

I have seen so far only black crows and generalize that in order to be called a crow it has to be black. Now I am confronted with a white crow-like creature, I may plausibly argue that it is not a crow (perhaps, I would call it as 'wcrow'). Similarly, without admitting that there are black swans, I may, if such creatures exist, call them 'bswans'. But if the new child of Maitra happens to be fair in complexion, I cannot decide to call him a 'non-child of Maitra' (or even a 'w-child of Maitra').[1]

The above example takes us to the heart of the controversy that raged among different schools of Indian philosophers regarding the acquisition and possibility of non-perceptual knowledge in general and the question of universal truths in particular. It is somewhat well-known that, if we have to go beyond the mere perceptual, we have to depend upon inferences to be drawn on the basis of the perceptual evidence. Without this privilege, however, our fund of knowledge would have been extremely limited, poor and thin, sometimes even to the extent of being restricted to the sphere of our private experience. Inferences that we are allowed to draw, however, must be based upon not only the perceived item but also on the required relation that would warrant us to pass from the knowledge of one item to that of another. We may call the first item in this context a 'sign' or 'mark' (*linga*) of the second, the 'marked' or 'the signified' (*lingin*). Russell once put the point in a language that is strikingly similar to the locutions generally used by the Indian philosophers:

'It must be known to us that the existence of some one sort of thing, A, is a sign of the existence of some other sort of thing, B, either at the same time as A or at some earlier or later time, as, for example, thunder is a sign of the earlier existence of lightning'.[2]

The relation that is required to warrant this kind of inference is usually expressed in the form of a general preposition (and sometimes dubbed as the major premise in a syllogistic argument):

I: All cases of A are cases of B.

[1]Udayana cited the case of the blackness of herons as a possibility against the usual cases of white herons (c.f. *vakasya śyāmikā*). *Nyāyakusumāñjali*, ch. III, verse 7, *vṛtti*. Mill referred to the blackswan example. *Logic*, III, ch. 3, 52.

[2]B. Russell, *Problems*, p. 60.

The rationalist—empiricist controversy in the West now seems to be a matter of history. The empiricist's claim was roughly that all our knowledge is derived from experiences which was in consonance with the doctrine of Gassendi 'Nothing is in the mind which is not first in the senses'. But the rationalist, it seems, succeeded in showing that there are truths known to us *a priori*, for example, the logical principles themselves. Leibniz wrote:

'There are also two kinds of truths: those of reasoning and those of fact. The truths of reasoning are necessary, and their opposite is impossible. Those of fact, however, are contingent, and their opposite possible. When a truth is necessary, we can find the reason by analysis, resolving the truth into simple ideas, and simple truths until we reach those that are primary'. (*Monadology*, p. 33).[3]

If 'truths of reason' are necessary and their opposite impossible, and if the required inference-warranting relation expressed in form I is entailed by such truths, then it seems clear that we can make the desired progress from the perceptual to the inferential. Indian Naiyāyikas, however, argued that this relation is not obtained independently of experience, for it is only on occasion of particular experience (of examples) that we become aware of the general laws which the experienced cases (examples) exemplify. So far, the Nyāya claim appears less objectionable, for even Kant said:

'There can be no doubt that all our knowledge begins with experience'.[4]

There need be no difficulty in allowing that all our knowledge is 'elicited and caused' by experience. But the question is whether we should admit that some knowledge is *a priori*, 'in the sense that experience which makes us think of it does not suffice to prove it, but merely so directs our attention that we see its truth without requiring any proof from experience' (Russell, *Problems*, p. 74).[5] I shall try to show that:

[3]Leibiniz, *Monadology*, p. 33.

[4]Kant, p. 41.

[5]I have thus chosen the Russellian version of *a priori* knowledge in order to see whether the Sanskrit philosophers were aware of such notion, at least, implicitly. For, if they were not, there must have existed an important lacuna in their discussion of the problem of knowledge.

(a) The Naiyāyikas, in spite of their extreme fascination for empiricism, did acknowledge that some knowledge is *a priori*, although the issue was clouded by a confusion about what counts as proof and what counts as a source of knowledge,

(b) The Buddhists, led by Dharmakīrti, embraced the extreme view that inference-generating general relations are, in some sense, necessary, and therefore empirical examples are only inessential details for certifying an inference, which led to the development of the notion of *antarvyāpti*.

(c) The Jaina logicians developed the concept of necessity explained in terms of a hypothetical question (counter-actual), which, they claimed, was the best guarantee for the inference-generating relation.

8.2 LOGICAL TRUTHS

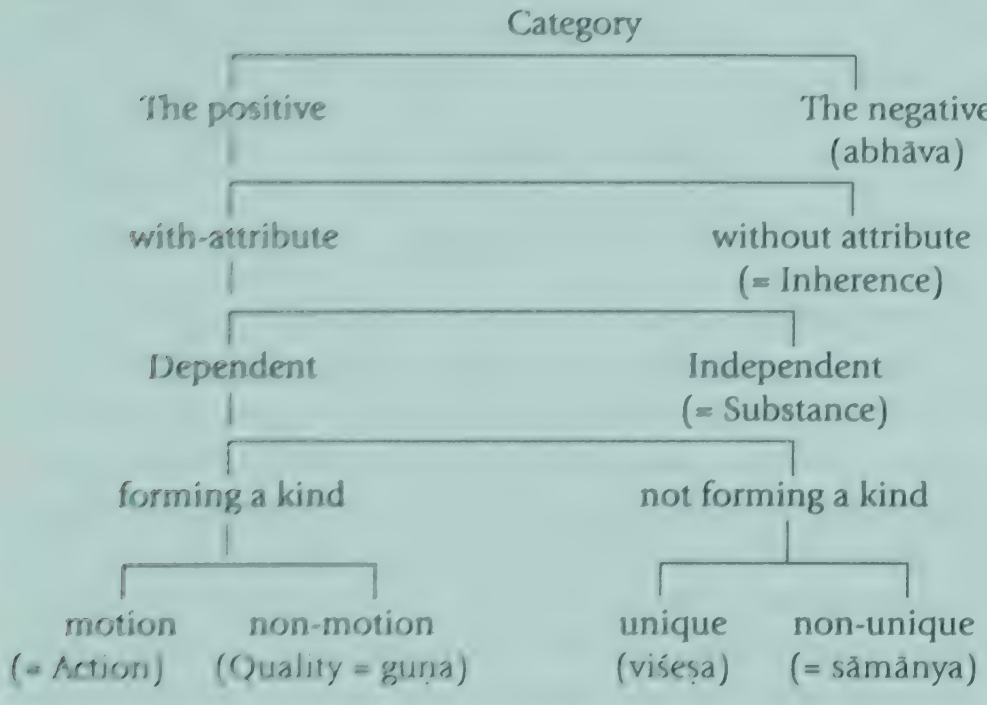
It is easy to see that the Nyāya would not doubt the *a priori* nature of (1) the logical truths such as the law of contradiction and excluded middle, as well as (2) the principle of inference. The first was well articulated by Udayana who said:

'Contradiction of "to be" with "not to be" leaves no other (middle) alternative. Also nothing can be both "be" and "not be" for the mere utterance becomes contradictory'.[6]

In the explanation that followed, Udayana said that we contradict our own utterance (*svavacana*) if we assert of something both 'be' and 'not be'. 'It is impossible to both assent and dissent to the same'. (*pratiṣedha-vidhyor ekatrāsambhavāt*). Udayana used this as his 'ontological' principle, with the help of which he derived the six Vaiśeṣika ontological categories. To wit: First the two-fold division of the positive (*bhāva*) and the negative (*abhāva*). Then the positive is divided into 'with-attribute' and 'without-attribute'. The relation of inherence is the one 'without attribute' for it is the 'cement' which connects the 'attributes' with whatever they are 'attributes' of. The 'with-attribute' sub-divides itself into the 'dependent' and 'independent' (*āśrita* vs. *an-āśrita*). The 'independent' is the substance. The 'dependent' is divided into those forming a kind or a generic concept and those that do not (*sāmānya-vat* vs. *niḥsā-mānya*). The first is dichotomized as motion and non-motion, and the second as

[6]Udayana, *Nyāyakusumāñjali*, Ch. III, verse 8.

unique to one locus and non-unique/common to many. Hence the following category-tree:



It may be possible to criticize Udayana's process of deriving the categories in this way from various points of view. But the *a priori* character of the logical or the ontological principle of contradiction and excluded middle that he envisioned here is unmistakable.[7] In the passage that I have used above the logical principles are not explained or defended in psychologistic terminology. It is *not* said here for example that one cannot know or cognize a thing to be blue and not blue at the same time etc. On the contrary, Udayana frequently appeals here to the notion of *sva-vacana-virodha* 'self-contradictory statement', and he does not cite any further *pramāṇa* or empirical evidence to justify this notion. (Compare: 'Contradiction ensues at the mere utterance.' 'Only a mad man would make such statement,' etc.).

8.3 THE PRINCIPLE OF INFERENCE

I have quoted earlier Russell as implying that if A (= thunder) is a *sign* of B (= lightening), and if A is observed then we are warranted

[7]This way of deriving the category scheme is give in Udayana, *Nyāyakusumāñjali*, III, verse 8, *vṛtti*. Here and elsewhere Udayana frequently appeals to the notion of *svavacana virodha* 'contradicting what has already been uttered (asserted)'.

to infer B, i.e. existence of B. Following the Nyāya philosophers, I wish to call it the principle of deduction or inference.[8] Although I am aware that this is not what is *strictly* called deduction in the Western logical tradition, I propose to use the term, for its similarity with such deductive syllogism,

> 'All men are mortal,
> Socrates is a man,
> Ergo, Socrates is mortal.'

is obvious. With a little ingenuity, one can regard humanity as an inferential *sign* of mortality, and if humanity is instantiated in a particular, Socrates, we are warranted to draw the conclusion that mortality is also instantiated in Socrates. This principle is accepted *a priori*, and hence it should be regarded also as a necessary truth in Nyāya, the opposite of which would be considered impossible. I do not know of any place in Nyāya where the truth of this principle has been called into question, although there has been some understandable confusion in this connection between what is called a logical necessity and what is a causal necessity. I say it is 'understandable' for it is a fact that Nyāya along with other Indian logicians lacked the conception of a proposition or its analogue. Hence the process of inference, under this theory, is either an *internal* mechanism (called *svārtha* = 'for one's own sake' by Diṅnāga) where one cognitive *episode* (called *jnana* = a piece of cognition) is necessarily followed by another, or an *external* mechanism (called *parārtha*), where sentences or utterances of them (speech acts) necessarily follow one after another. Therefore, in the first case, logic appears to be psychologized while in the second it is linguisticized. And in either case, it seems to me, a causal necessity is superimposed upon what is to be called a logical necessity. What I am inclined to call logical necessity is captured by the following expression of the principle of deduction. It A is a sign (*liṅga*) of B, and if we assert A of something, we must assert B of it. But INTERNALLY it is viewed also as a *causal* consequence of a cognitive episode of knowing A in a particular case (that a thunder has occurred now) combined with another cognitive episode of knowing or remembering that A is the sign of B (that

[8]In Russellian language this is a 'logical principle' that can be stated as follows: 'Suppose it is known that *if* this is true, then that is true'. *Problems*, p. 71.

thunder is the sign of lightening). The combination of the cognitive episodes described here is technically called *parāmarśa*. It is frequently claimed that if there is *parāmarśa* of the kind just described, the conclusion cannot but follow. What is not made clear, however, is that the causally necessary consequence is also the logically necessary consequence. If we pose a question, however, this muddle might be cleared up. What happens when a person falls asleep or distracted otherwise, immediately after the *parāmarśa*? Obviously the concluding cognitive episode will not follow, but an Indian logician has to answer that this psychological contingency does not detract from the logical necessity of the consequent conclusion following from the prior beliefs or certainties.

No Naiyāyika would say, for example, that the *parāmarśa* is not *logically* capable of generating the inference, but they would insist that the non-arising of the inference in the above was due to non-logical factors, viz., the lack of the general condition for a knowledge-episode to occur. This way of viewing matters comes from the conviction that each inference has to be as actual occurrence, a knowing episode. One may go further and comment that since a dispositional concept of knowledge did not properly develop in the Indian tradition and a *strict* notion of proposition was not available to the Indian logicians, logical principles were not easily formulable in formalistic language. But this lacuna, a tolerable one, need not be construed as their lack of understanding of the logical principle involved in actual inferences, for example, the idea of the *anumiti* 'inferred conclusion' being a logical consequence, over and above, being a causal consequence, of the *parāmarśa* i.e. the premise-complex. Expressions such as 'linga' and 'lingin', 'sādhya' and 'hetu', 'vyāpya' and 'vyāpaka' were invariably used, for they were invested with some formal character, and hence became convenient for expressing the necessary process of inference without the use of variables etc. (See the Diṅnāga quotation in the next paragraph).

The same argument may be applied to the EXTERNAL mechanism of inference (i.e. to 'inference for others') where the concluding utterance necessarily follows not only *causally* but *logically* from a combination of previous utterances. In fact the descriptions of the process i.e.., the logical process of inference, are also available in Sanskrit texts in non-psychologistic terms. In fact, Diṅnāga has said in his *Pramāṇa-samuccaya* II, 21:

'If the sign is there, the signified (*lingin*) is *necessarily* (*eva*) there The sign is there just in case (*eva*) the signified is there.'[9]

The sign is also called the pervaded (*vyāpya*) and what it is a sign of is called the pervader (*vyāpaka*). It is asserted in the texts: If the pervaded is there the pervader *must be* there (*vyāpyasattve vyāpakasya avaśyambhāva-niyamaḥ*). It is true that Diṅnāga emphasized the empirical method by which a sign is ascertained to be a logical, i.e., inference-war-ranting. Sign, viz., citation of a positive and a negative example. But a sign becomes ascertained to be a sign in this way, if its presence necessarily signifies the presence of the signified. Thus it is the necessity, i.e., inviolability of the inference-principle that is being emphasized here. Negatively it may be argued that none of the logical principles, non-contradiction, excluded middle, or deduction, were claimed to be derived from any *pramāṇa* or empirical evidence. The question was naturally raised: 'What makes an evidence a sound empirical evidence (a *pramāṇa*)? In answer to such question, both Vātsyāyana and Dharmakīrti appealed to a sort of pragmatism. (Vātsyāyana: successful activity, Dharmakīrti: uncontradicted practice). But the obvious circularities in such positions cannot be avoided unless some *a priori* principles are tacitly admitted—principles which are *logically* independent of experience (in the sense that experience cannot prove it) and yet elicited and caused by experience. This is what I call the *a priori* principle of inference.

8.4 THE LOGICAL PROBLEM OF INDUCTION AND INFERENCE

The principle of inference is based upon something's being the inferential sign of another thing, the signified. The inference-generating relation that must obtain between the sign and the signified is called since Diṅnāga's time *vyāpti* or *avinā-bhāva* 'pervasion' or 'invariance'. However, early Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Sāṃkhya used to supply a list of relations which they thought would fall under the category of inference-warranting relation, such as cause-effect, inherence, co-inherence, succession, or precedence. Some of these relations are conceived as necessary, such as inherence or co-inherence. Hence they fulfilled

[9]This verse from *Pramāṇasamuccaya* quoted in Arcata's *Hetubinduṭikā*.

well the requirement of 'invariance' between the sign and the signified. Diṅnāga criticized this way of supplying lists of inference-warranting relations as misleading and counter-productive, and turned his attention towards the notion of invariance as such and how it could be grounded upon our experience. Drawing probably upon the insight of Nyāyasūtras 1.1.34–37 he sought to provide a perceptual basis of our knowledge of invariance by claiming that we need two empirical examples, one positive to suggest the relation and the other negative, to strengthen it. A negative example is one where the absence of the signified is accompanied by the absence of the sign. I shall discuss the role of such examples in the next section.

I have already noted that in the Pre-Diṅnāga period, some of the inference-warranting relations were thought necessary. Analysis of some typical inferences that were cited as instances will make our point clear. Let us consider Vātsyāyana's example of *sāmānvato dṛṣta*: The sun moves for it is seen to be displaced. With a little ingenuity, we can imagine here that the *vega* (potential motion, i.e., the apparent motion for us moderners) of the sun causes both its unobservable movement and its observable displacement in the sky. (Uddyotakara discusses elaborately how the sun's displacement in the sky can be a matter of observation, if not directly, then indirectly).[10]

This example is, in fact, illuminating in several ways. Here Vātsyāyana cites an empirical instance to underline the logical connection between movement and displacement. A man, he says, who was in one place, is seen now in another place and this 'displacement' is necessarily preceded by his moving. This empirical instance, however, is only a psychologically necessary condition to make us aware of the necessary connection between displacement and movement. It plays no part in justifying the truth of connection between displacement and movement of bodies. In fact, it seems to me that it is *analytically* true that displacement entails movement of bodies. Therefore, such knowledge, though it is accessible to us only through such an empirical instance, is not dependent upon it for its justification.

The second example, viz. the *pariśeṣa* type of inference, discussed by Vātsyāyana, is based upon an *a priori* logical principle. Vātsyāyana formulated the logical principle as follows:[11]

[10]See Uddyotokara under *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.5.

[11]Vātsyāyana under *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.5.

'It is the conclusive decision in favour of the 'remainder' (*siṣyamāna*), when other possibilities (*prasaṅga*) are denied, since the question of further possibilities does not arise (*anyatrā-prasangāt*)'.

Suppose, we are trying to determine whether a particular individual *x*, which has already been known to belong to a generic class A, belongs to any one of, say, the three possibilities under A, A_1, A_2, or A_3. Prior knowledge of its being A excludes other possibilities, B etc., and if fresh evidence is given to exclude its being A_1 and A_2, we may safely conclude that it is A_3. The conclusion would be safe given the assumption that A_1, A_2, and A_3 are mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive possibilities. The Vaiśeṣikas concluded following such principle of inference that sound is a quality (not a substance, nor an action), and this is necessarily true on the assumption that there are only three mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive classes of real particulars (*a la* the Vaiśeṣika category scheme).

The acceptance of the Vaiśeṣika category system led the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika to accept several necessary truths. A quality (*guṇa*) necessarily resides (or *inheres*) in some substance or other. The same is true of an action or motion. It is *impossible* for a quality or an action to be and not resident (by what they call the relation of inherence) in a substance. This point is clearly manifested in the discussion of the third illustration of inference in Vātsyāyana's second set of examples, To wit: Desire, cognition etc. are first identified as qualities (*guṇa* in the Vaiśeṣika sense), and in this way they individually constitute the necessary inferential mark or sign of a substance, which is then identified as the soul-substance.[12]

The first inference of this complex of inferences is obviously based upon the 'necessary' truth that a quality must inhere in a substance. Or, in other words, it is true because it is given by the definition of quality in the system. Of course, it will not be true if we do not accept the system as a whole (as the Buddhists did not). Hence, we can probably say that the said inference is based not on necessary truths but on axioms etc. of the system. The latter part of the same inference-complex is however aided by the process of excluding other possibilities. This principle is already illustrated in the previous example. If there are only *n* number of possibilities, and if possibilities 1, . . . *n-1*, are rejected, the remainder (*pariśeṣa*), i.e., the n^{th} possibility must hold true.

[12]See Vātsayāyana and Uddyotakara under *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.10.

8.5 GENERALISATION AND THE ROLE OF EXAMPLE (DṚṢṬĀNTA): THE BUDDHISTS

Indian logic took a new turn in the hands of Diṅnāga and Uddyotakara. Diṅnāga, as I have already noted, drew his insights in the nature of logical theory from the early Nyāya discussion of *nyāya* or *avayavas*, i.e, what I have called the EXTERNAL mechanism of inference where a concluding step or utterance is reached through other successive steps or utterances of sentences. This is what they called 'to show others how an inference occurs'. Diṅnāga emphasized that the inferential sign or mark must fulfil three conditions: (1) It is present in the *pakṣa*, (2) It is present in a *sa-pakṣa*, and (3) It is never in a *vi-pakṣa*. The first is to make sure that the mark is *instantiated* or *present* in the case under consideration. The other two conditions are supposed to guarantee that the relation of *vypāti*, invariance or concomitance or pervasion that obtains between the mark and the marked. In other words, these two conditions are supposed to guarantee the truth of the inductive generalization that is expressed as:

'All cases of A are cases of B'

Diṅnāga emphasized that an example should be cited to show the togetherness of A and B in one case and another to show their joint absence. Does it mean that Diṅnāga wanted to base induction upon empirical examples and thereby give only a posteriori justification of induction? If this is so, then the sceptic would argue that even myriads of agreeing instances without a single exception known go very little way towards establishing a universal proposition (compare Mill, iii, 2, and the Cārvāka sceptic in Jayarāśi, pp. 64–74).[13]

One way to avoid this interpretation ascribed to Diṅnāga is to notice that Diṅnāga required only single instances, and not a thousand of them. In fact, Diṅnāga needs two instances, one instantiating togetherness of A and B and the other their co-absence. We have access to the knowledge of general truths only through clearly known particulars, and, as Kant has emphasized, all our knowledge begins with experience. For Diṅnāga knowledge of particulars is possible only through sense-perception, and in this respect, his view is not very different from the one expressed by Aristotle in *Posteriore Analytics*.[14]

[13]Mill, III, 2. Jayarāśi, pp. 64–74.

[14]Aristotle, 81b 6.

The above interpretation of Diṅnāga is admittedly based upon Dharmakīrti. I concede that Diṅnāga's own view about the knowledge derived from evidence, i.e., inference, might be (unconsciously) closer to that of Mill. Diṅnāga seems to have regarded the *pramāṇa-śāstra* more a study of the principles of evidence than as a study of the experience-independent formal truths. But in the *Apoha* section, his position became at best ambiguous. For it seems to have been claimed there that what makes the inferential passage from the word/concept 'oak (tree)' to 'tree' safe and sound is the fact that the former excludes a greater number of possibilities than the latter and hence it would be impossible for the latter to apply to what has not already been excluded by the former. This must have provided the opportunity to Dharmakīrti to transform Diṅnāga's logical system (perhaps unwittingly) into one which explicitly presupposes the concept of necessity as well as analyticity.

Dharmakīrti argued that the required justification of the relation of 'invariance' of *A* with *B* is not based upon the observation of particular empirical instances. Seeing *A* and *B* in a positive example and seeing their absence in a negative example may suggest the invariance. But our mere seeing that *A* is absent in a particular case where *B* is absent (*vipakṣe adarśana-mātreṇa*) cannot establish invariance, for a deviation of *A* from *B* is always possible in unexamined cases. Since a single grain of rice has been seen to be cooked on examination, it does not follow that all the rest are also cooked.[15] Hence he concluded:

> 'Fixing of invariance is due to (necessary) causation and 'own-nature'. It is not due to seeing presence (in the positive example) and not seeing (it in the negative example'). 'Otherwise, how else would one entity necessarily occur with the other (*avaśyaṃbhāva-niyamaḥ*')?[16]

It is clear that Dharmakīrti intended the invariance to be a necessary relation. We can say that *A* has a necessary relation with *B* if and only if it is impossible for *A* to be without *B*. This, I think, to be an explication of Dharmakīrti's notion of *svabhāva-pratibandha* (PV. *Svārthānumāna*, p. 11). From one point of view, we can say that the necessity that Dharmakīrti attaches to the relation of invariance is only a verbal necessity or semantic necessity. For in his system, the *svalakṣaṇas*,

[15]Dharmakīrti, *Pramāṇa-vārttika, Svārthānumāna, verse* 15, *vṛtti*.
[16]Ibid., *vṛtti* and verses 33–34.

the ultimate reals, the unique particulars, are essentially unrelated; only concepts or universals, or words denoting them can be related. The *tādātmya* relation ('identity') that he takes to be one of the two inference generating relations, is in fact an identity of 'reference' of the two words 'oak' and 'tree'. The meaning of each word is given by the concepts it excludes, or rather by its excluding the referent from a set of concepts. If two words are so related that they both exclude the same set of concepts or possibilities, or one excludes a more inclusive set than the other, then the first is a *logical mark* or a necessary sign of the second. To use a Western and modern terminology, we can say that the 'pervasion' relation here becomes *analytic* in the sense that it is the *apoha* meaning of one term that is either equivalent to, or contained in, the *apoha* meaning of the other term. This type of relation can be called necessary in the sense that it is *logically impossible* for there to be a counter example to upset this relation. As Dharmakīrti says, if an object (the 'subject' or *pakṣa* of the inference, identified by an indexical) allows us by its 'own nature' to reject a larger number of possibilities (by allowing us to call it 'an oak') then necessarily it would allow, by the same 'nature' to exclude a smaller number of possibilities (by allowing us to call it 'a tree').[17]

The notion of a necessary relation is more visible in Dharmakīrti's discussion of the inference from 'existence' to 'momentariness'. This is also called a *svabhāva-hetu*. Here, of course, the *apoha* meaning of the two terms 'exists' and 'momentary' is not appealed to establish the required connection. But an argument (to my mind, an *a priori* argument) is formulated to show the logical necessity of one being implied by the other: To be *means* to do something; to do *means* doing either in succession (*krama*) or simultaneously (*yaugapadya*), there being no third alternative. It is *logically* impossible, it is said, for a non-momentary object to do anything in either way, for then it would be the locus of two logically contradictory properties ('doing' and 'not doing'). The final court of appeal is therefore a logical law, the law of non-contradiction as it was understood by Dharmakīrti. In this way, it is established that to be or 'exists' necessarily implies 'fluctuations' or 'momentariness'. It is also argued that no intelligent person needs to seek the help of any example (either positive or negative)—a requirement that was insisted upon by Diṅnāga:

[17]See the diagram in ch. 6 of this book.

'For the learned, only 'reason' *hetu* (without example) should be cited.'[18]

This was the precursor of the notion of *antarvyāpti* ('internal invariance')—a later development among the Buddhist logicians of post-Dharmakīrti period. Thus, Ratnākaraśānti argued that the 'invariance' relation is established between 'existence' and 'momentariness' on the basis of the evidence that the opposite situation (*viparyaya*) viz., one applying without the other, is impossible i.e., involves a contradiction (cf. *bādhaka*). Examples are not needed to comprehend this relation.[19]

It may be noted that in the 'oak-tree' example, a sort of verbal necessity is being appealed to, when in the above 'existence-momentariness' example, what is being appealed to may be called logical necessity for finally the final court of appeal is, as I have already underlined, the law of non-contradiction.

8.6 NECESSITY IN NYĀYA INFERENCE

The Naiyāyikas admit a sort of inference which they called *kevala-vyatirekin* 'inference based upon the unique sign'. The form of this inference as it has been discussed in *Navya-nyāya* comes very close to a tautological inference. Udayana explicitly connected this type of inference with the purpose (*prayojana*) of a definition or *lakṣaṇa* (*Kirāṇāvali*, p. 291), for a definition supplies the essential and necessary mark, the unique property, of the object under consideration. The form of the inference is given as follows:

A differs from non-A's
for it has the property e.

This is only an articulation of the purpose served by the definition: A is whatever has *e*. The purpose of a definition, according to this theory, is to underline the distinction of what is being defined from what it is not. In other words, it says what makes an A an A, i.e., distinct and unique from all non- A's (what makes a lump of clay clay and not non-clay cf. *pṛthivi* etc.). This inference, therefore, is based upon the

[18]Dharmakīrti *Pramāṇavārttika, Svārthānumāna*, ch., verse 29.

[19]Ratnākaraśānti, pp. 104–14. My arguments here, I *think*, answer partly the criticism by E. Steinkellner of my earlier assertion that *svabhāva-hetu* spells out an 'analytic' relation. See Steinkellner (1974).

notion of an essential or unique property, which becomes the necessary mark, i.e., the logical sign of what is being signified or inferred. The Naiyāyikas conceded that to understand the 'invariance' relation in such inference we do not need certification from a positive example (for it is impossible to have a positive example, *sapakṣa*, in such cases), but they were not sure whether or not a negative example (where both are absent) does serve any function in generating the cognition in us of the said invariance relation. As far as I can see this inference, to use a modern jargon, becomes true by definition (or even true by convention). Naiyāyikas, of course, would insist that this inference is necessarily true for the opposite situation would be impossible, or a logical contradiction.

8.7 THE JAINA APPROACH

The Jainas argued that the inferential mark instead of having the three characters mentioned earlier should only have one character, viz., a necessary connection with the marked or the signified so that 'A is the sign of B' means that it would be impossible that there would be B without there being A (cf. *anyathānupapatti*). In other words, the relation between A and B cannot be contingent but necessary. It is pointed out by the Jainas that the property of being Maitra's off-spring as a logical mark of being dark in complexion (our example in the beginning) is untenable although it fulfils the three required conditions or characters mentioned by the Buddhists. To wit: The future child of Maitra will be dark, because he or she will be a child of Maitra. Now the property, being of an off-spring of Maitra, i.e., the sign, is present in the case under consideration, and is so also present in another (present) child of Maitra who is also dark, as well as it is absent from any non-dark person (for no non-dark person is a child of Maitra so far). The reason that this type of inference is not valid, the Jainas argue, is that it is not based upon the necessary connection between the sign and the signified. In other words, it is only a contingent fact that so far all children of Maitra have been dark in complexion. The invariance relation must be based upon necessity. In other words, we cannot say that it is impossible for someone to be a child of Maitra (in future) unless he or she is also dark. Therefore the relation is only empirical and contingent, but not necessary. The truth-claim of the inference based upon it is accordingly dubious. This contingent relation is called in Nyāya language *aupādhika* or 'conditional'.

The Jaina logicians such as Akalaṅka and Prabhācandra criticized the Diṅnāgian notion of 'reason' *hetu* as characterized by the 'tripe condition' and argued that the reason or the inferential sign must be necessarily related to what is signified, for citation of examples has no power to justify the invariance. According to them, what is important is to see whether the following hypothetical question could be answered in the negative:

'Is it possible for the inferential sign to occur without the signified in question'?

Usually a negative answer is found by an appeal to some reductio-ad *absurdium* and in this way we have virtually a definition of necessity in the Jaina theory, viz., it is impossible for the sign to be without the signified, i.e., what we are trying to infer in the case.

At this point a disclaimer may be in order. I have shown above on what kind of occasions the Indian logicians could be said to have been aware of the experience-independent necessity. But as they lacked the general concepts of proposition, the distinction between the analytic and synthetic was never clearly made. Since they were mainly concerned with the episodic notion of knowledge, even the *a priori* or the so-called knowledge of necessity has to be occasioned by empirical condition, an example in the actual world. And the definition of truth tended, for the same reason, to be pragmatic and behaviour-oriented. I therefore argue that while it is possible to read such philosophers as Diṅnāga and Uddyotakara and to see that they were at best indifferent to, at worst ignorant of, the *a priori*, it would be wrong to interpret them as rejecting consciously the concept of experience-independent formal truth. It is, however, with the Jainas and partly with Dharmakīrti, that we have clear statement to the effect that in the case of necessary relation, the exemplification in the actual world matters very little.[20]

8.8 THE TENSION BETWEEN THE NECESSARY AND THE CONTINGENT: NĀGĀRJUNA

Nāgārjuna's dialectical arguments to refute such philosophic notions as causality, existence, action, and motion, contain a modality which

[20]See Akalaṅka and Prabhācandra on the concept of *Vyāpti*, Akalaṅka, p. 74, *Nyāyaviniścaya*, verse 323.

is not often noticed or recognized. It is argued, for example, that assertion of existence amounts to eternalism.

(1) If A exists, it exists always.

What is the force of the argument? Why do I have to admit that A exists always if I admit only that A exists? One possible answer is obviously that the proposition 'A exists' hides a modality. That is, to bring the force of the argument on the surface, we must say:

(2) If necessarily A exists, then A exists always.

And in this case, the entire statement becomes obviously true. In the terminology of Indian philosophers this position is dubbed as eternalism (*śāsvata-vāda*). If existence is asserted to be the property of something A, then, under this theory, it is not possible for an A not to have that property at any time under any circumstances (cf. *sarvadā* and *sarvathā*). This, therefore, is a clear formulation of something like a definition of what is called in modern terminology, *necessity de dicto*. According to the conventional symbolism:

$$\Box \text{ (A exists)} \equiv \sim \Diamond \sim \text{(A exists)}.$$

In Indian logical terminology, assertion of existence is equivalent to assertion of eternalism. Compare Nāgārjuna: *astīti śāśvatagrāhaḥ*.[21]

The same or almost the same point is made with the help of the notion of *svabhāva* 'own-nature', which I think comes very close to the notion of 'essence' (as in 'essentialism'). Of course, when we are talking about essence, we are talking about necessity *de re*. But obviously *de re* necessity can sometimes be explained, as Plantinga has argued, by way of *de dicto*. Nāgārjuna formulates the opponent here as one holding to the doctrine of unchangeability or immutability of everything. Just as eternalism is a heresy in Buddhism, so is the unchangeability. The argument means as: if a *bhāva* or thing has a *svabhāva* 'own-nature' then it *cannot*, i.e, it is impossible for it to admit of any change or *parabhāva* ('other-nature'). Change is defined as admission of *another nature* (= *parabhāva*).[22] The argument claims that if a thing A is A *by nature*, i.e,, essentially or necessarily, then under no circumstances can it be a non-A. We may restate the argument.

(3) If necessarily an A (a lump of clay) is an A then it is impossible that it would not be an *A* under any circumstances. The thrust of the

[21] Nāgārjuna, *Mādhyamaka-Sāstra, Kārikā*, ch. 15, verse 10.

[22] Ibid., verse 3.

argument is this. Experience shows that a lump of clay is sometimes a lump of clay, and under other circumstances it becomes a clay-pot, or broken pot-parts, or muddy paste (when mixed with water). And this runs counter to the *svabhāva* doctrine. The *svabhāva* doctrine, under this interpretation, assumes that a thing is what it is necessarily. In other words, it denies contingency. A thing that has 'own-nature' cannot have 'other nature'. There is, therefore, implicit in this argument, a necessity *de dicto* defined, as before, impossibility under any circumstances.

My interpretation, however, may be objected to. For I have not mentioned the Sanskrit equivalent of 'necessity'. In reply, I shall first point out that if we have to take the arguments of Nāgārjuna at all seriously, such an interpretation is almost inescapable. Obviously Nāgārjuna did not dispute the obvious, i.e., that we see at some point of time a thing, say a pot, to be coming into 'existence' or produced, and going out of 'existence' at another point of time. If this is admitted then it is difficult to formulate a conditional of the form. If A exists then A exists always. For the consequent here is obviously false while the antecedent would be true. The other alternative would be to accept a position like this: for any proposition *P*, if *P* then necessarily *P*. This means in its turn that the opponent that Nāgārjuna is attacking denies any notion of contingency. This is how the argument goes through.

My second answer to the objection is that sometimes the Sanskrit particle *'eva'* imparts a modality (necessity) to the proposition expressed by the sentence in which it occurs. Consider:

'yad bhavati tad bhavaty eva'
'What happens *necessarily* happens'.

The causal formula in Buddhism is formulated as: *yasmin sati bhavatyeva*. There are several other expressions that seem to carry the same force: *'Svabhāvena'*, *'prakṛtyā'*, *'sarvathā'* etc. Nāgārjuna says,

'prakṛter anyathābhāvo na jātūpapadyate'

which we can translate with a little ingenuity:

'If it is *necessarily* so, it cannot be otherwise'.[23]

[23]Ibid., verse 8.

So far we have only examples of causal or natural necessity. And it seems that Nāgārjuna and his followers are accusing (perhaps wrongly) their opponents (either the Ābhidharmikas or the Naiyāyikas) of holding to a very strict doctrine of natural necessity or non-contingency. The opposite of the only alternative to eternalism that Nāgārjuna recognizes, is 'annihilationism' (*uccheda-vāda*). This was also a heresy in Buddhism. Now we may construe 'annihilationism' as the 'contingency' doctrine. But Nāgārjuna formulates the 'contingency' doctrine as follows: If an A is contingent, then it follows that that A does not exist at a given time or under some circumstances. Now 'A does not exist under some circumstances' can be construed into two ways:

(a) It is necessary that *A* does not exist under some circumstances.
(b) *A* necessarily does not exist (under some circumstances).

Nāgārjuna's argument, however, does not allow (a). In other words, unlike the previous case, Nāgārjuna's argument becomes false under the *de dicto* formulation of necessity. In fact, Naiyāyikas and those who are with them would accept (a) without much ado. Nāgārjuna obviously would not allow this construal, for, according to him, annihilationism says that we accept (b), which is, in fact, a formulation of *de re* necessity, and in addition, we have to omit 'under some circumstances', for it would be either meaningless or redundant. Now, Nāgārjuna's argument goes through, for he claims: 'If A necessarily does not exist, A would not exist under any circumstances'. In this way, assertion of necessary non-existence, for Nāgārjuna, amounts to annihilationism—an impossible doctrine. To put it briefly, eternalism in this interpretation amounts to the doctrine of (natural) necessity while annihilationism to the doctrine of impossibility of everything.

The situation can be explained as follows. Suppose we represent eternalism as

'It is necessary that A exists'.

The opposite of this doctrine is not formulated by negating this proposition as a whole. The opposition is not like one between '*p*' and 'not-*p*'. Rather it is formulated by negating the predicate 'exists' or using the 'complement' of the property predicated by the proposition included in the 'that' clause. Annihilationism is therefore represented as:

'It is necessary that A *does not* exist'.

And this can be reformulated as

'It is impossible that A exists'.

In the usual notation we may state:

$$\Box \sim (\text{A exists}) \equiv \sim \Diamond (\text{A exists}).$$

From the above analysis, it seems that *de re* necessity was regarded as more fundamental. A property predicated by a proposition would be either necessary or essential to the subject or it would have to be an impossible property, i.e. it would be impossible for that subject to have that property. More clearly, either the property concerned must necessarily belong to the subject or its complement must so belong. This means probably that either a thing is necessarily (essentially) blue or it is essentially non-blue. Thus, both the doctrines, eternalism and annihilationism, are, under this interpretation, doctrines of necessity, for impossibility can be seen only as negative necessity. And, by the same token, both doctrines deny contingency.

What seems to emerge from the above discussion is that, of the four modal concepts, necessity, impossibility, contingency and possibility, the first two are obviously recognized by the opponents of Nāgārjuna and therefore also by Nāgārjuna so that his method of refutation would be possible. How about contingency? Nāgārjuna, it seems to me, would accept contingency but only as 'appearance', as 'non-ultimate'. The contingency doctrine of the Nyāya is, therefore, only a *samvṛti*, not *paramārtha*. This will, of course, raise a number of interesting issues which I must here forbear to enter. The concept of possibility, however, did not emerge, as far as I can see, as one clearly distinct from contingency. The possible were usually regarded as future contingencies.

8.9 NECESSITY AS A BASIS OF DHARMAKĪRTI'S FLUX DOCTRINE

The argument of Dharmakīrti to establish the doctrine of universal flux or momentariness has, almost in a similar manner, made use of the modal notion of necessity. The starting point in the argument is, of course, to be means to be able to do something. This means that

'A exists at time t_1' is defined here as 'A is capable of doing B at time t_1'. The argument then continues:[24]

'yad yadā yat-karaṇa-samarthaḥ tat tadā tat karoty eva'

which I translate as

'If *A* is capable of doing *B* at time (moment) t_n, then *necessarily A* does *B* at t_n'

This proposition is then exemplified: *'yathā kurvad-rūpam aṅkure'*. We may explain it as:

'If the sprouting seed is capable of sprouting at t_n, then *necessarily* the sprouting seed sprouts at t_n'.

This is, however, the beginning of the long argument, which then goes on to propose that there must necessarily be a distinction between the sprouting seed at t_n and the 'same' non-sprouting seed at t_{n-1} or, for that matter at t_{n-2} etc. We are in fact back again to the concept of *de re* necessity. The property called *capability of sprouting* is regarded as the necessary (essential) property of the subject (= *dharmin*) $seed_1$, and its complement, absence of such capability, is the essential property of $seed_2$ (i.e. the seed at t_{n-1}). In the course of this development the negative version of the general principle is stated:

'yad yadā yan na karoty eva tat tadā tadakaraṇa-samarthaḥ'

This I translate as:

'If *necessarily* A does not do B at t_{n-1}, then A is (or, is said to be, according to Ratnakīrti), incapable of doing B at t_{n-1}'.

What is called A at t_n and has the necessary property—called *capability of sprouting*, must be different from what is called A at t_{n-1} but lacks that property necessarily. Conclusion:

$$A \text{ at } t_n \neq A \text{ at } t_{n-1}.$$

The same can be repeated to show: A at $t_{n-1} \neq$ A at t_{n-2}, and so on. For if existence means doing something or capacity to do something (and the Buddhist argues capacity to do something is necessarily equivalent to actual doing something), and if a thing is capable of

[24]This is often cited in connection with the argument for *kṣaṇa-bhaṅga-siddhi* since Dharmakīrti's *Hetubindu*.

doing something at t_n it is impossible for it to do it either at $t_{n\ minus\ 1}$ or at $t_{n\ plus\ 1}$. This amounts to saying that that very thing that exists at t_n does not exist either at $t_{n\ minus\ 1}$ or at $t_{n\ plus\ 1}$.

Dharmakīrti's argument for the flux doctrine is based upon his complete rejection of the notion of potentiality (not an uncommon sort of move as Aristotle notes an opponent who rejects such a notion) and his belief that to be causally potent means to be doing whatever it is supposed to do. But causal necessity that he is talking about is reduced to a sequential necessity like today following yesterday. If Monday follows Sunday then necessarily Monday follows Sunday, for it would be impossible for it to be Monday if it did not follow Sunday. There may be many objections against Dharmakīrti's argument but that is not our concern here. I have tried to show that it was concerned with the concept of modality such as necessity and impossibility. The strength of the argument is derived also from the inconceivability of A's being capable of doing B at t_n and not necessarily doing B at t_n. Nāgārjuna's argument, in the previous case, similarly derives its strength also from the inconceivability of A's being necessarily (essentially) A and then its changing into something B.

If I am allowed to indulge into some broad generalisations, I wish to argue that the notion of *paramatva* 'ultimacy' in *'paramārtha'* (in both Buddhism and Vedānta) demands some sort of necessity. The ultimate reality (*paramārtha*) is either necessarily existent or necessarily non-existent. It is either necessarily immutable or ever (necessarily) in a flux. It is impossible for it to be both, existent and non-existent, immutable and fluctuating. The phenomenal reality or the facts of our ordinary experience are to be distinguished from the ultimate in that they lack the required necessity. They are contingent, and to use a near equivalent Sanskrit word, they are *kādācitka*. Therefore they are seen to be both existent and non-existent from different points of view; they are experienced as both immutable and mutable in some sense or other. This is the character of contingency, the character of *prapañca*. These philosophers in this way describe the whole empirical world as contingent, lacking necessity, lacking ultimacy. They are therefore closer to one of the theses of the radical empiricists; there is no necessity in Nature. There is necessity either in language and logic or at the ultimate level of reality. Causal necessity (in the phenomena) is only sequential.

Possibility as a modal notion had a very limited use in the whole of Indian philosophy. Most possibilities are simply future

contingencies, or a possibility has been already excluded or nullified by a contingency. Suppose, my car is red. This fact, a contingent fact, has already defeated (excluded) the possibility of its being not-red. Does this 'excluded' possibility, then, join the group of impossibilities? No clear and explicit answer emerges from the Indian philosophers except in their discussion (Udayana) of naming the non-existent or citing a non-existent entity as an example. In any case, consideration of the excluded possibilities have somehow been thought idle in the Indian context.

CHAPTER NINE

Religion and the Study of Comparative Religion

9.1 ON THE DEFINITION OF RELIGION

What is Religion? If this seems like a Socratic question, it is intended to be so. The Socrates of Plato's *Dialogues* continually asks questions. The Buddha in his *suttas* also continually asks questions. The Buddha discussed a fourfold way of answering philosophic questions. Certain questions are answerable, according to the Buddha, by a direct yes or no (*ekāṃśavyakaraṇīya*), while others are not. Those that are not can be either answered through analysis and qualification (*vibhajya*) or by a counter question (*pratipraśnena*) and there are even those that should be set aside, i.e. should not be answered (*avyākṛta*). The verse in the *Nikāya*:[1]

ekāṃśa-vacanam ekaṃ
vibhajja-vacanaṃ paraṃ
tatiyaṃ patipucchāyya
catuṭṭhaṃ pana ṭhāpaye

Of these four types, the Socratic questions in Plato's dialogues usually belong either to the second or to the third. The question that I have stated at the outset is very similar to one (i.e. the predominant) type of Socratic questions, and it has the general form 'What is X'? Examples are 'What is justice'? in the *Republic*, and 'What is knowledge'? in the *Theaetetus*.

The special nature of this question becomes clear from a consideration of the kind of answer the questioner demands. It will

[1] *Anguttara Nikāya*, I. 197.

for example be hardly satisfactory to the questioner if in reply to this kind of question we cite some instances of X. One might say, 'Well, Christianity is a religion, so is Islam' and so on. But that will not be a proper answer. This will be similar to the answer that Socrates got from Theaetetus to the question 'What is Knowledge'?, viz. knowledge is geometry and sciences or crafts like shoemaking. Socrates refused to accept this answer and explained his point with an illustration.[2]

> Socrates: But the question you were asked, Theaetetus, was not what the objects of knowledge, nor yet how many sorts of knowledge there are. We did not want to count them, but to find out what the thing itself—Knowledge—is. Is there nothing in that?
>
> Theaetetus: No, you are quite right.
>
> Socrates: Take another example. Suppose, we were asked about some obvious common thing, for instance, what clay is; it would be absurd to answer: Potter's clay, and ovenmaker's clay, and brickmaker's clay.

Analogously, enumeration of examples of religion will not answer our question.

A Socratic question, however, leads to problems when he asks, 'What X *itself* is'? (i.e. when he asks 'What is X'?) he wants, by his own admission (*Meno* 72 b), to be told the 'being' or, 'essence' of X.[3] But it may be easily argued that to tell the 'being' or 'essence' of X is often the hardest thing. In fact in the modern context one may argue that search for the 'essence' was 'the wild-goose chase' of the ancient philosophers. Others will even argue that there is no such thing as essence. But we can learn further from the Socratic lesson. When the search for the 'essence' of virtue (the question was 'What is virtue'?) failed, Socrates was led to *hypothesize* a certain account of the essence of virtue. This was the Socratic way out. I propose that we take a similar way out when faced with the question 'What is religion'?

'Religion is not an Indian word. There is hardly any Sanskrit or Pali equivalent of this word. The word *'dharma'* in modern Indian languages is used sometimes in the sense of religion. But certainly *dharma* as it is understood in the *Dharmaśāstras* does not carry this sense.[4] Modern use of the term *dharma* in the sense of religion is perhaps accidental. If I am allowed to speculate, I would say that this usage is partly accidental and partly dictated by the rather

[2]Plato, *Theaetetus*, 146e–147a.

[3]Plato, *Meno*, 72b.

[4]See P. V. Kane, introductory comments in *History of Dharmaśāstra*, vol 1.

intimate connection between *dharma* in the *Dharmaśāstra* and the religious and ethical duties of the Hindus. There may be other historical and semantic reasons for such a usage, for example, highly regarded virtues, such as non-violence, and other ethical disciplines are often called *dharmas*. But I will leave the semantic problem here. The point remains that an exact equivalent of the word 'religion' is hard to find in the Indian traditional writings.

If 'religion' is not an original Indian word, does it follow that the concept of religion or the thing we may call religion is non-existent in Indian culture? I see no *a priori* reason that it should. A phenomenon may remain unrecognized, uncategorized and hence unnamed in a society or a culture. In such a case, a name to identify that particular phenomenon may not exist for the time being in the language of that culture. Later on, when the word is formulated and with it a concept to fit it, attention can be focused upon it as a distinguishable fact. Something like this seems to be true of such words as 'religion' and 'mysticism', for neither of them are of Indian origin. But phenomena answering these words have been present in Indian culture for a long time, and the concepts are not entirely foreign to it. This partly takes care of the caveat that says that when we are talking about 'religion' and 'mysticism' in the Indian context we are probably super-imposing foreign notions in a culture where they do not belong. There is a related problem that arises here, but I will come to discuss it later.

To take the Socratic way out we might hypothesize about what constitutes the 'essence' of religion. In fairness it must be acknowledged that search for the ever elusive 'essence' led Socrates to accept sometimes a sense in which the thing defined differs from all other things. This notion of definition comes very close to the Indian theory of *lakṣaṇa*. The attempt to give a *lakṣaṇa* 'characteristic' or a 'defining mark' is the effort to differentiate and distinguish.[5] (Robinson, *Plato*). The Indian theory of *lakṣaṇa* is a pronounced effort to differentiate and distinguish the object or the set of objects to be defined (*lakṣya*) from others (*ttara*): in 'others' are included both those that belong to the same type (*sajātīya*) and those that do not (*vijātīya*).

Now the question arises: can we define 'religion' following this Indian model? What we have to do is to note some unique characteristic or a number of such characteristics, that would belong

[5]R. Robinson, (1953), 8, 56.

to all and only those that we can legitimately call religion. A differentiating characteristic need not be an essential characteristic assuming that we understand what an 'essence' is. A simple way to see this point is to remember that there may be a number of differentiating characteristics with regard to an object or a set of objects, but an essentialist will hardly accept the possibility of there being more than one essence in such cases.

William P. Alston, having first considered some typical examples of the definition of religion formulated by several philosophers, notes the following 'religion-making characteristics' and then concedes that not all of them need to be satisfied to make a phenomenon religion, but only just 'enough' of them:[6]

(1) Beliefs in supernatural beings (gods).
(2) A distinction between sacred and profane objects.
(3) Ritual acts focused around sacred objects.
(4) A moral code believed to be sanctioned by the gods.
(5) Characteristically religious feelings (awe, sense of mystery, sense of guilt, adoration etc.) which tend to be aroused in the presence of sacred objects and during the practice of ritual and which are associated with the gods.
(6) Prayer and other forms of communication with gods.
(7) A world view.
(8) A more or less total organization of one's life based on the world view.
(9) A social group bound together by the first eight factors.

The above list is rather long. An abbreviation which may not do full justice to it may be given as follows: a set of beliefs (doctrinal, ethical and social) supplying a basis for a set of ritual and other acts as well as demanding total organization of one's individual and social life behaviour patterns and emotional responses centring around such beliefs.

Are these characters unique in the case of religious only? Could they distinguish religion from other phenomena? In order to answer this question we need to be clear about what these other phenomena are from which religion needs to be distinguished. Let us proceed in this way. Religion can be seen as a particular component of a given culture and it needs to be distinguished from other components of the culture, for examples, from such an assortment of items as language,

[6]W. Alston, p. 5.

food and dress, literature, and ways of entertainment. It now seems that religion can be separated from other components of a culture by some of the characteristics stated here. But if we accept this position, we have to assume at least the word 'religion' is never used ambiguously and its range of application is well-defined and clear-cut with no borderline cases. But this is too much to expect of a culture-word like 'religion'. Besides, with a little ingenuity one can cite counter examples to several of the above characteristics, if not all.

Some of these characteristics are in fact *ad hoc* generalisations from an examination of a paradigm case, a religion like Roman Catholicism. At the other end of the scale, we might put a tribal religion where moral codes are devoid of the sanction of the deity, or even a respectable religion like Jainism which definitely rejects the notion of God or Providence or Theravāda Buddhism which rejects not only God but also the notion of a soul that survives death or obtains freedom in salvation.

We have thus noticed an odd assortment of phenomena in various cultures and sub-cultures (using the term in non-pejorative sense) to which it is our practice to apply the term religion. At this point, we might give up entirely, if we have not done it already, our attempt to find a definition of religion in the old sense of discovering an 'essence'. We are now actually at the heart of a philosophic problem that has gained some currency today. The problem is connected with L. Wittgenstein's notion of 'family resemblances'. Wittgenstein has argued that even the resemblances within a group of things to which the same general term applies (e.g. 'game') are nothing but vague and overlapping likenesses which one sees amongst different members of a family. There is nothing common to all such examples, much as there is nothing common in different examples of game, but we see only 'similarities overlapping and criss-crossing, sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of details'.[7]

It seems to us that 'religion' is such a term where all that we can expect is 'family resemblances'. If this is so, then an adequate definition of religion will be ever elusive. But, of course, we can, *pace* Socrates, cite examples. While citing examples, we need not claim that the people we are talking to, would thereby *see* what is 'common' to all of them—'the common thing' that I was unable to articulate. Nor is citing examples 'an *indirect* means of explaining, in default of

[7]Wittgenstein, PI, I. 66.

a better'. But 'the point is', Wittgenstein says, 'that *this* is how we play the game'.[8]

We may still argue that we started with a rather high expectation—expectation to find some essential and universal feature or features of all religions. But now we are told to curtail our expectation. For probably there is no essential and universal feature that belongs to all to which the term 'religion' applies. Or if there is any it is the hardest thing to formulate or even to isolate it from such a wide variety of phenomena that we call 'religion'. It may be suggested at some point that since it is seen today that concern for an after-life or concern for our existence, or the lack of it, after death, is a universal concern for almost all religious people, such a concern can be taken to be the universal mark of all religions. Even here counter examples are not very hard to find. First, Buddhism would be an enigma for us if we wish to apply such a model. Even if this problem is somehow resolved through some liberal interpretation on *nirvāṇa* , we will have at least two clearest counter examples. Concern for the after-life is hardly visible, if at all, in early Vedic religion as well as in early Judaism.[9]

Instead of trying to bring all sorts of religions under one common denominator, perhaps, we should be talking about different families of religion. Linguists sometimes talk about different families of language in order to identify shared features or resemblances. We may likewise direct our attention to different families of religion and try to expand the metaphor used by Wittgenstein mentioned above. Perhaps, the three important monotheistic religions, Christianity, Judaism and Islam, which are also historically related can form one family. Tribal religions, and religions of sub-cultures, can form several families. Perhaps, we should introduce also geographical variations. Thus, Indian religions by which I mean the religions that originated in India, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, will form one family; Chinese religions will form another. If we resolve our problem which appeared formidable in the beginning, in this manner, that is, according to the above proposal, then our task of studying religions in its essential features becomes manageable and feasible.

One may ask now: what happened to our original question? Can we define religion? And if we cannot, can we claim to have understood

[8]Ibid., I. 71.

[9]The same is true of Marxism, to be sure. And this may go in favour of those who wish to consider Marxism as a religion in a novel sense. I think, however, that the use of the term 'religion' in the context of Marxism is patently metaphorical.

religion as a phenomenon or a component of our culture? In reply, I can perhaps ask a counter-question. This will conform with the Buddha's third variety of question, where an answer is given by a counter question. I may ask, what is the goal of our definition here? Do we need to answer this question: What is religion? A. N. Whitehead, for example, raised a similar objection against the demand for definition and clarity, in his *Adventures of Ideas*:[10]

> Insistence on clarity at all costs is based on sheer superstition as to the mode in which human intelligence functions. Insistence on hardheaded clarity issues from sentimental feeling, as it were a mist cloaking the perplexities of fact.

Literary critics sometimes argue that by defining a term we may unnecessarily narrow down the sphere of its application, we cut down or weaken its expressive power by our attempt to relieve it of all its ambiguities. Ambiguities are sometimes powerful tools in expressing our honest thoughts which are not easily expressible in ordinary language. The moral of all this is that if we have not obtained a definite answer to our original question, perhaps, it is all for the better. It is, to use the Indian idiom, a *bhūsaṇa*, not a *dūṣaṇa*. It is not the case that we do not understand what religion is, but that it is extremely difficult to formulate some essential characteristic that will belong to all the variety of things to which the word is applied. We can talk about families of religion, and it is more promising to look for some essential feature or features within a particular family. And even if we do not finally find what we are looking for, our effort or labour will not go unrewarded, for we will then at least understand the nature of religion a little better than we did before. By formulating a critique or searching for a counter-example to expose the false definitions, we have at least made the idea of religion a bit clearer.[11]

9.2 ON THE PROBLEMS OF 'COMPARATIVE RELIGION'

If we have learned to be less ambitious by now, we can give up the global approach and concentrate on regional matters. The global

[10] A. N. Whitehead, p. 90.

[11] A. Kenny makes a similar point about natural theology: If natural theology is to be the philosophical analysis of the concepts used in talking about God, then a disproof of God's existence or an argument that the very notion of God was incoherent, would itself be an act of natural theologizing. *The God of the Philosophers*, p. 4.

approach has been the breeding ground of many confusions and controversies. While 'Religion' (i.e. Theology) has been part of the academic curricula of most Western universities for a long time (in fact the origin of the idea of 'university' is said to be genetically connected with the religious seminaries). 'Comparative religion' has comparatively been a new thing. And even in a short period it has had its strongest critics. In early 30's, in founding the Chair of the Spalding Professorship at Oxford, the late Mr. H.H. Spalding defined the purpose as follows:

> The purpose of the Professorship shall be to build up in the University of Oxford a permanent interest in the great religions and ethical system . . . of the East, . . . to interpret them by comparison and contrast with each other and with the religions and ethics of the West . . ., with the aim of bringing together the world's great religions in closer understanding, harmony and friendship . . .'

It is because of this description, the Spalding Chair, in spite of its official title, is described by most as the chair of comparative religion. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the late President of India, held the chair for a long time and obviously thought that the purpose as defined by Mr. Spalding was worthwhile and that it might generate a closer understanding of the East.

Professor R. Zaehner, the second occupant of the chair, however, expressed grave doubts in his Inaugural address in 1953. In Jansenistic protest, he said, 'Nor do I think that it can be a legitimate function of a university professor to attempt to induce harmony among elements as disparate as the great religions of mankind appear to be . . . such a procedure may well be commendable in a statesman. In a profession that concerns itself with the pursuit of truth it is damnable'. Regarding the worthwhileness of the study of comparative religion, he summed up his view as follows:[12]

> 'The only common ground is that the function of religion is to provide release. There is no agreement at all as to what it is that man must be released from. The great religions are talking at cross purposes'.

The phrase 'comparative religion' is however not a new term in the West. It is almost as old as Christianity. Philo, who lived at the time of the rise of Christianity, and was an interpreter of the Hebrew

[12]R. C. Zaehner, (1970), p. 439.

scripture in terms of Greek philosophy, apparently used it as a form of reproach for certain people who disputed the divine and revealed origin of scripture. He referred to them as 'a sort of amateur students of comparative religions'.[13] According to Philo, these people used only analogy as an argument to conclude that the account of the appearance of God at Mt. Sinai and the revelation of His Law there was false just as the Greek mythological stories about appearances of gods to men and the revelation of laws were decidedly false. Philo however dismissed them as 'impious' and simply asserted his faith in revelation.[14]

Therefore Zaehner's misgivings were, in fact, in line with very ancient tradition of a believer's misgivings about other religions.

About sixteen years later, in his Gifford lecture, Zaehner slightly modified his view about 'comparative religion'. He wanted to withdraw particularly the word 'damnable' from his previous remark. His title of Gifford lectures was 'Concordant Discord' (1970). He remarked that he could have chosen the subtitle as 'A Symphony of Faiths'. He admitted that he stressed the discord rather than the concord of religions, and went on to add:[15]

'This was in principle right; for it is the duty of the scholar, even on the popular level, first to analyse the differences and only then to look for a possible synthesis . . .'

Zaehner's criticism, even in its modified version, remains a criticism, and should not be taken to be an isolated opinion. For it expresses in general, but perhaps too loudly, the feeling of a considerable number of intellectuals, academics and common people in the West. I personally take it to be a good constructive criticism of any unserious attempt to study comparative religion. But perhaps the word 'comparative' itself caries this pejorative sense, a comparative study means an unserious popularizing, and it may be well advised that we drop the word 'comparative'.

By shunning a word, however, we do not solve the problem immediately; we only clear some smoke and let the dusts settle. The question remains, and let me formulate the objection in the following way. (1) The basic principles of great religions of the world are so much different from each other that it is practically impossible for

[13]H. A. Wolfson, p. 3.
[14]Ibid., p. 4.
[15]R. C. Zaehner (1970), p. 8.

one, who understands, and *believes* in, one religion, even to understand any other. Each religion is a whole new world and it is impossible to move between such worlds. One may, of course try to read the texts and scriptures of another religion, with an *academic* interest, but one will never be able to 'catch its inner spirit' (whatever the phrase means). (2) It may be all right to study one's own religious tradition and its theology. Why should we make any effort to study another, a foreign religion or religions? Is it not a fact that the true doctrine, or truth, is to be found in my own religion, and all the other religions might only have semblances of the truth? If so, what is the use of learning a lot of non-truths, when we can devote time to a more worthwhile purpose? (3) Alternately, religion is not a discussable subject and hence should not be taught publicly. As an American friend defined religion to me facetiously, 'Religion is something that we believe, and practice, but do not talk about'. Non-study of religion may be recommended on some nobler ground. For example, it can be said that each religion claims to have the monopoly of truth, which invariably leads to such distinctions of people, 'us' and 'them' and the eventual hatred and violence between them. It may be more statesmanlike to avoid talk of religions so that we may bring the fighting parties together. Let us be peace-makers.

9.3 ON THE EXCLUSIVENESS OF RELIGIOUS FAITH

I shall comment on all these three one by one. What is actually implied by the first position? Among other things, it implies that in order to understand (and 'catch the inner spirit' if you like) a particular religion one has to belong to the tradition and, more importantly, has to believe in the ultimacy of the truth it advocates. Since the student or the scholar of comparative religion must study many religions, he is faced with an impossible task. He may understand his own religious tradition very well but he will know hardly enough of the others to compare with. The argument is based upon the premises that religious faith is exclusive each of the others. If, therefore, *proper* understanding of a religion pre-supposes faith in it, then comparative religion is like discovering a golden mountain.

One may however question the second assumption. Why must *faith* precede understanding? The proposition is sometimes put in the following way. One who does not practise a particular religion is incompetent to study, understand or teach that religion. There had

been an interesting public controversy on this point in England some years ago. Professor Ninian Smart, who believes in, and has successfully advocated, separation of the study of religion from the study of theology, confronted the issue when he was appointed at the University of Lancaster to form a Department of Religious Studies according to his new principles. The post, in the advertisement, was declared to be open to 'someone of any faith or none', for this was thought to be an excellent and necessary principle for a truly secular university. But there was a storm of protest from various quarters, and the columns of *The Times* were flooded with correspondence on the *absurdity* of such an advertisement.[16] Anyway, the point was made, despite the protest, that teaching of religion in a university is different from preaching it, and that competence to do the first is not necessarily dependent upon faith, which seems essential only for doing the second.

Preaching and teaching are, however, two very closely related concepts when the subject-matter is religion or morality or something very similar. Hence, depending upon the subject-matter, the two can be unwittingly conflicted. Human nature being what it is, it is hardly surprising that we sometimes preach what we also teach. This is, it seems to me, at the heart of many disputes over the teaching of religion in academic institutions. It is one thing to impart religious education to young children at schools, and it is an entirely different thing to teach religion as an academic subject in universities. And it is rather obvious that scholarship, rigor, etc. are needed rather than faith for the second discipline.

Is there a real opposition between the rigorous demand of academic scholarship and one's total commitment to a particular religious faith? This seems to have been a matter of dispute between Professor W. C. Smith and Mr. Per Kvaerne in a paper 'Comparative Religion: Whither and Why' A Reply to W. C. Smith (*Temenos*, Vol. 9, Helisinki, 1973).[17] It seems to me that total commitment to a particular religious faith may conceivably make one blind to a critical examination of his own religion, but in the understanding and examination of the religious doctrine of another, it is hardly a hindrance by itself. Therefore, Smith is certainly right in claiming that the two, scholarly rigor and one's own religious stance, are

[16]N. Smart, Introduction in *The Phenomenon of Religion*.

[17]W. C. Smith and Per Kvaerne, in *Temenos*, vol. 9, 1973.

compatible. Problems arise, of course, in studying a foreign religion (and hence they are certainly problems of the discipline called 'comparative religion') because someone's total commitment to a particular faith may arguably prejudice his mind to such an extent that he would be led into systematic misinterpretation of the second religion. It is therefore as a safeguard, Professor Smith wishes to get his interpretative analysis agreed by a person (presumably a scholar, he mentions Dr. Radhakrishnan for Hinduism) belonging to the religion he is interpreting. His opponent, however, finds this procedure quite repulsive (and quite rightly, I think) because there is hardly any agreed, uniform interpretation of any of the 'living religions', endorsed by all its present day practitioners. This hard fact makes Smith's suggestion unworkable. My own view, however, is that this dispute need not arise as long as both sides agree about the need for scholarly rigor and academic seriousness in the discipline of comparative religion. For when such safeguards are available and put to use, very few interpretations could be just *mis*interpretations, although it is possible for there being two or more interpretations coming from different persons conflicting with each other. I shall elaborate this last comment.

Let us take a lesson from a problem in modern philosophy of language. An interpretation obviously presupposes a meaning-content of what is being interpreted just as each radical translation from an entirely foreign language is based upon some assumed meaning-content of the sentence that is being translated. Those who are sceptical about the intelligibility of such mental entities as *meanings* may argue in favour of a thesis that Quine has called 'indeterminacy of translation'.[18] Deriving presumably some support from B. L. Whorf's thesis about language and culture that different language-communities have quite different conceptual schemes, W. V. Quine has developed his philosophic thesis about 'radical translation'. This has been built around the theme that a linguist who tries to translate from a new (hitherto unknown) language cannot, short of imposing the grammatical structures and conventions of his own language, go very far in translating successfully from the new language into his own language. He has argued that in the case of sentences that are at any considerable remove from what he calls 'observation sentences' the translations would be indeterminate. What is more striking about

[18]See, for example, the arguments in W. V. Quine's *Word and Object*, ch. 2.

this thesis is that it is possible under this theory for two translators to develop independent manuals of translation, both of them compatible with all speech behavior and all dispositions to speech behaviour, and yet one manual would offer translations that the other translator would reject. In the words of Quine:[19]

'My position was that either manual could be useful, but as to which was right and which wrong there was no fact of the matter'. (p. 167)

As to whether this thesis is acceptable or not, the debate will no doubt continue. My purpose in citing this analogy is, however, to derive some support for the point that I have made above. Different religious communities can be compared with different language-communities. An outsider's attempt at interpreting a religion is similar to the attempt at a 'radical translation' of a linguist. Comparativists in religions may therefore be in the same footing with the linguists in this regard. Now if Quine is right (and this is highly debatable), then it is not surprising that there could be two conflicting 'manuals' according to which a religion would be conflictingly interpreted, and the remoter the religion is, the less sense there is, a la Quine, in saying what is a good interpretation and what is bad. This is why I think that a so-called misinterpretation in comparative religion may not be a misinterpretation. There will however be many practical criteria, behavioural or otherwise, which will ordinarily decide in favour of one interpretation rather than another, just as the case is with radical translation too (as Quine no doubt admits). But an indeterminacy of interpretation with regard to remote religion will still persist.

9.4 CAN TRUTH BE MANY-FACETED?

I now wish to comment upon the second question. This presents us with a rather serious problem. If, as a believer, I am necessarily required to assume that Truth exists only in my adopted or inherited religion, and the rest of the world is running after shadows or phantom then there is very little point for the intelligent seekers after truth to study and try to understand other religions with any seriousness. It will not do to take a 'Catholic' attitude and talk about the spirits of ecumenicism and inter-faith dialogue. For it will hardly work if I invite other people to enter into a dialogue with me while making no secret

[19]W. V. Quine, (1977), p. 167.

of the fact that I am already convinced that your belief is wrong or your religion is not quite correct but I wish to listen to you in order to understand this false doctrine, for false it will remain even after my understanding of it. Nor will it be fair to take a statesmanlike stance (Zaehner said initially that comparative religion is the business of a statesman) and say, for instance, 'Religion has been a very strong sentiment among the people since the primitive days, and people are eager to fight, kill and die for religion. They go at each other's throat. A Hindu kills a Muslim, a Moslem a Hindu. An Arab kills a Jew and vice versa. A Protestant kills a Catholic and so on. Anti-semitism and holocaust are all facts of this world. Therefore we need peace-makers, and hence the search for a dialogue and understanding'. This sounds to be a noble goal. But it has a foul stink—that of diplomacy, and hence of duplicity, and is basically disingenuous. 'I am asking you to enter into a dialogue with me, although I know the truth for certain and you do not, but I am not telling you what I really think for that will hurt your feelings, and I am letting you talk to me for then you will see the truth and I will know probably why you were wrong etc.'. I think there is hardly a reasonable way of getting around this initial difficulty, unless we are inclined to start with a slightly different premise.

What is this different premise? It is, I think, due more to the attitude of the scholar rather than his belief. It is not derivable from the proud attitude that is hardened by a conviction about his own know-all-ness. It is possible in a person who is softened and soaked with a humility about knowledge-claims, about 'what else there is that I do not yet know'. The scholar need not slacken or give up his faith in his own religion and still can open his mind to the idea that there may be more than what he knows or believes. This attitude may therefore eventually accommodate for the relevant thesis or premise, which is very close to the Jaina doctrine of *anekānta*, viz., truth is like a many-faceted gem, having a manifold sparking appearance, each appearance having a completeness and coherence of its own. Using another Jaina imagery we can say that truth is like a huge mountain not all of whose parts can be grasped at once except by a 'noetic synthesis' or what the Jainas would call omniscience. Different views are in this way to be regarded as results of different *view-points* from which the total truth, that many-faceted gem, is or has been observed.

Alternately, one can borrow the sceptical imagery of 'radical translation' due to Quine, and can put the point as follows. Different

religious systems enriched by diverse historical traditions are like different 'translation-manuals'—all of them may be compatible with the totality of the religious behaviour of man. As translation-manuals, diverse religious systems are only ways of interpreting the religious experience of man as well as his religious yearnings and aspiration, and there may be no fact of the matter as regards which one is more true than others, as long as all or most of them match well with the total religious dispositions of man.

This indeterminacy as regards the soundness or otherwise of religious doctrines, I argue, may help us to accept and rationalize the fact that there is such a variety of religious faiths on the face of our globe, each claiming absolute monopoly over 'truth'. Late Professor Zaehner once said, 'the variety of religions is indeed a scandal and offence'.[20] This will indeed seem to be so, unless we try to understand rationally the phenomenon of the variety of religious faith prevalent in different cultural units all over the world. What I have suggested above seems to me to be a very promising preface to the study of comparative religion.

The premise that I have suggested here should be taken seriously as a prelude to our study. For this offers us a good starting point in our discipline. It is, I argue, also implicitly accepted by many good scholars of comparative religion. There are scholars who have firm faith in their own religion and at the same time are not bigoted. It is indeed striking to see that many scholars today, who firmly believe that their own religion is unique in being based upon the (historical) revelation, are nevertheless willing to study, explore and understand with enough imaginative sympathy the religious doctrines of different traditions. It is the enlightened awareness of the Christian/Catholic world today that interfaith dialogue is useful and that it is possible for a Catholic to be tolerant of other living faiths. That this is largely true, in spite of the odds being against it, not only lends support to my above argument for a 'different' premise but also indicates that there is more to the concept of revelation itself than simply being an event which took place in the past when at Mount Sinai God made himself known to Man and gave them the Law.

Revelation did not directly teach intolerance. Moreover, from the time of Philo onwards, scriptural philosophers sometimes interpreted revelation as 'progressive revelation'. This meant 'a continuous revealment of God to chosen individual human beings to make known

[20]R. C. Zaehner (1970), p. 9.

to them the meaning of the revealed Law'.[21] It is argued that although revelation was final and perfect, it was expressed through an imperfect medium, the human language. Therefore it was found feasible for man to continuously 'discover not new truths but real meaning of the old truths' embedded in the final historical revelation. If such a conception of the Christian revelation is entertained then, I think, toleration does not become incompatible with it. This, then, makes it clear how study of comparative religion (or interfaith dialogue, if you like) is possible when we start from a slightly different premise—the premise that I have referred to a few paragraphs earlier. It is not necessary that the firmness of one's faith in one's own religion has to be undermined if one wishes to develop empathetic understanding of another religion. I believe that the tolerance that is obviously present in Jainism, Buddhism and some forms of Hinduism, is not due to any lack of absolute commitment to their received religious doctrines or indifference, but due to the awareness that the total truth or its meaning is a matter that is progressively discoverable.

9.5 RELIGION AND WORLD PEACE

Our third question does not sound as much arrogant and extreme as the second. For silence is sometimes blissful. Besides, religious faith, it is true, has been a very divisive force on earth from the very primitive days of our civilization. There are many sad reasons for this very deplorable state of affairs, viz. violence and bloodshed and war in the name of religion. In 1978, there was an International Conference on Science, Religion and World Peace in Kyoto, Japan. This was held in the background of the memory of the atomic explosion in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I was asked to present a paper on the theme that sounded quite paradoxical and puzzling to me: 'Religion as a principle of integration of mankind'. Religion has been the root cause of so much bloodshed in the history of mankind that I was baffled to consider it as a principle of integration or peace.[22]

It is arguable that emphasis on religion could hardly give us unity and peace unless we all belong to one religion, which is impossible. For man has instinctual fear of the unfamiliar, of the strangers, just as a child cannot feel secure before a stranger. Anthropologists inform us that in most tribal languages, the word for 'man' denotes only

[21]H. A. Wolfson, p. 4.

[22]B. K. Matilal (1978), published in the *Proceedings* 1979.

members of that particular tribe. Therefore, anybody that lives on the other side of the valley is a stranger, and hence by definition sub-human. The same idea is expanded to imply that anybody with a different faith, different set of beliefs, customs and habits, must be a stranger and therefore an enemy. Therefore, basically, there is very little difference between tribal fights and international wars. Religious beliefs has been one of the contributory factors, though, one may argue, not a major factor these days. But can we really say so? Crises in the Middle East, in the Indian sub-continent, in Northern Ireland—will all be evidence to the contrary.

What is meant above by saying 'unless we all belong to one religion'? It does not mean certainly that everybody should be *converted* into one religion, but rather that *religion* should be converted into something else. Since Mohammed cannot go to the mountain, we may conceive of the mountain coming to Mohammed. Thus, instead of the universal conversion into one religion, one can plead for the conversion, i.e. transformation of the notion of religion. A man is born as an animal and it is only our humanistic education that helps him to grow up to be a man. Our society's education is supposed to be a humanizing process so that the child can grow up to be a man, not a psychopath or a psychotic. Therefore it is conceivable that what we may call human religion will teach us to regard nobody as sub-human; it will teach us to discard the peculiar, infantile 'stranger-therefore-enemy' logic which unfortunately persists in human behaviour all over the world. This suggested conception of religion is admittedly very nebulous and impressionistic. It leaves out experience, God, mysticism, original sin, ritual, eternal life, and a whole lot of other things, which are admittedly important. But the only point here is: one has to be first a MAN as opposed to a beast before one can go ahead in search of fulfilment or God, and the suggested notion of religion is only relevant to one's effort to rise from the level of animal to the level of man. For the rest we remain open. Our third point argues for 'non-talk' of religion in the context of world peace and unity and this can only be done, I think, at the expense of mutual trust in one another.

9.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

So far I have only generated controversies. I wish to make some constructive suggestion now regarding the study of religion in

academic institutions in India. The study of religion in academic universities of India has just started. As in the case of many other concepts in our modern education, this is also an adaptation of a western concept. One can possibly Indianize it. My suggestions will be concerning the Indianization of the study of religion in academic institutions.

In the West there are, very broadly, two different ways by which the academic study of religion is approached. Following Ninian Smart I will call them, 'doing Religion . . . and doing (e.g. Christian) Theology'.[23]

By 'doing Religion' is meant 'the study of religion' and this includes, among other things, types of enquiry such as prehistory, history, archaeology, sociology, and psychology. 'Doing Religion' in this sense is comparatively new while Theology has a long history. An important component of both the study of Religion and Theology is now being called the philosophy of religion. But all these have centred around, openly as well as covertly, the Judaeo-Christian tradition in general and Christianity in particular. This is sometimes done quite unconsciously due to probably what Smart has called 'the secret identification of religion, in our Western culture, with the Judaeo-Christian tradition'.[24] Sometimes this is done more deliberately as a safeguard against the possible misunderstanding and misrepresentations, against the conceptual problems and confusion of commitments. This is certainly one-sided although in some cases it has been inescapable while in other cases it can even be justified. But for the philosophy of religion this seems to have been a serious limitation.

Now there are two models that we can follow: philosophy of language and philosophy of science. For a philosopher of language, it may be argued that it is not essential, though it may be desirable, to know a lot of different, very 'unlike', languages. Philosophy of religion similarly may not demand knowledge of many religions. In doing philosophy of science, however, one needs to know a fair amount of science. Similarly, following this model, one can say that philosophy of religion demands knowledge of a fair amount of religion. But still the analogy is not clear. By 'a fair amount of religion' do we mean 'a number of religions'? or simply 'a fair amount of his

[23]N. Smart 1973, pp. 4–5.

[24]Ibid., p. 5.

own religion'? If the second, then there is no demand to learn about other religions. If the first, then to justify the charge about the limitation of the study of the philosophy of religion, I need to say more.

In fact I prefer the first position and allow that it is not essential, though desirable, for a philosopher of religion to know a number of different religions besides his own. There is no need to force into the discipline of the philosophy of religion a new concept, 'philosophy of religion and religions'. Philosophy of religion can in its own right be based upon the philosophical study of the Christian concepts and beliefs. As W. P. Alston has argued.[25]

> 'Fruitful thinking about religious problems arises not from idle curiosity about the religions of the world or from the attempt to 'choose a religion', like shopping for a refrigerator, but from a vital concern for some religion with which the thinker feels a necessity to come to terms'.

This position seems impregnable. But the only difficulty, it seems to me, is that it then becomes, as it has been recently, very similar to old Theology, and it is better to see it in that way.

We have therefore two extreme situations: comparative religion is treated, if it is seriously treated at all, as an exercise in comparative mythology, i.e. mythology of non-Christian religions. And philosophy of religion being primarily concerned with the chief topic of Christianity, viz., the problem of evil, is the modern partial version of old theology, although it has taken the 'linguistic turn' and deals with the language (and meaning) of religion. I think knowledge and understanding of other religions or religious traditions distinctly different from one's own can certainly make a new contribution here. It can generate, among other things, discussions on, and insights into, the broader problems of religious knowledge and the goals of religion. And this, in turn, can certainly enrich what we may still call without hesitation and perhaps with more justification, the philosophy of religion.

To come back to Indian situation: If religion is to be studied as an academic subject in Indian universities, it is better not to duplicate the Western situation in this case, but to strike a new course. Fortunately in Indian religions the belief in the existence of a supreme deity, God, was not so central as it was in Christianity and Islam. Therefore theology, even in an extended sense, need not be the all-pervasive

[25]W. Alston, p. 14.

concern in the study of religion, although it certainly could be part of it. The study of Indian religions today should obviously include not only Hinduism and Buddhism but also Islam and Christianity. So let there be a comparative study of all religions without prejudice to any. Let there be objectivity as much as it is allowed to us, human beings, an objectivity that will meet also the rigorous demands of scholarship. The study of religions can be a humanistic study—a study that helps us so much in understanding art, poetry, literature, mythology, history and architecture in each of which man's religion has found its expression. And comparative religion can be done objectively and developed into intercultural understanding, though not necessarily into inter-faith dialogue for reasons already indicated. 'Comparative religion' unofficially means something else in the Western countries. But we can choose the literal meaning and make it 'a study of each in the context of all'—(W. C. Smith).[26]

With such a study of comparative religion as the basis we can develop the philosophy of religion having a character distinct from the current western philosophy of religion yet complementary to it. Let me call it the Indian philosophy of religion, for its concerns will not be identical with those of the West. In the course of these lectures I have outlined some of these concerns that may be characterised as particularly Indian. India has a long tradition of scepticism—a point that is seldom realized today—and this scepticism often culminated in mysticism. This subject is worth exploring further. Philosophers, while developing Indian philosophy of religion, should be able to take a stance, for professional purposes, of philosophical neutrality. This seems to be the required distinction between the theological examination of the religious beliefs and the philosophical examination of them. Another engaging theme in our Indian philosophy of religion would be the concept of *duḥkha* 'suffering' and escape or freedom from it. All religions of Indian origin agree about the persistence of 'suffering' or *duḥkha* through different births and the very complex relationship that our *karma* mechanism is supposed to hold with 'suffering'. All these beliefs can be examined against a rational background and some sociological, historical and political explanation can be suggested. Indian philosophers of religion should also deal with the concept of *dharma* and morality, with how, if at all, morality is compatible with such non-theistic systems as

[26]W. C. Smith, pp. 170–71 in *Temenos*, Vol. 9, 1973.

Buddhism and Jainism, what is the distinction between atheism and what I call 'non-theism' of Buddhism and Jainism, and how it is possible to justify a religion without a supreme all-powerful being and so on.

Arthur Koestler said, '(The West's) attitude to Asia was either that of the conqueror armed with his gun-and-gospel truth, or that of the pilgrim in sackcloth and ashes, anxious to prostrate himself at the guru's feel'.[27] Both are equally dangerous and threatening as far as I can see, and what I am trying to say here is that we need not be caught between these two streams. Or, to change the imagery, we should let the window open to let the Western wind gently come in to blow the cobwebs away and to mix with the stuffy air of our room so that it gets a new life, but we need not be thereby, to use a jargon that Mahatma Gandhi used, 'be swept off our feet'.

[27]A. Koestler, p. 11.

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